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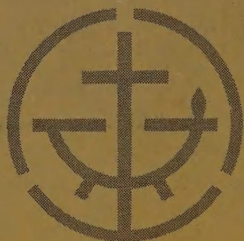


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PREACHERS OF THE AGE

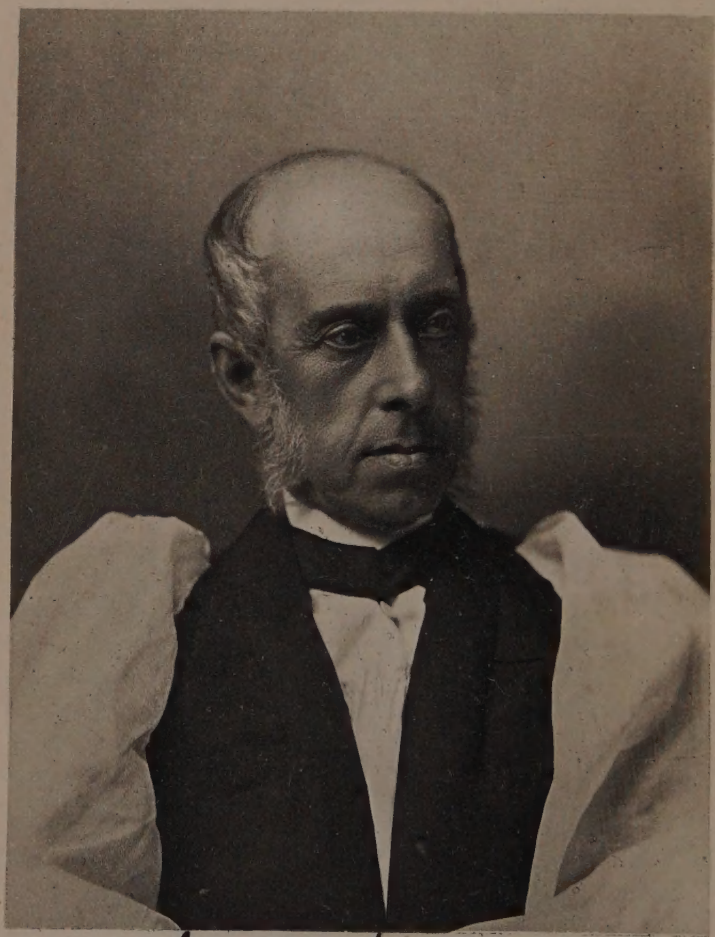


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Preachers of the Age

THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER



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THE GOSPEL OF WORK

BY

ANTHONY W. THOROLD, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

PRELATE OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER

HON. FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

"We ascend by one another"

LONDON

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"The Church is not responsible for saving the world; she is responsible for holding up to the world what is alone a real salvation: if the world will be ignorant, let it be ignorant."—PROFESSOR MILLIGAN.

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF
PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D.,

BISHOP OF MASSACHUSETTS,

STRONG, FEARLESS, TENDER, ELOQUENT,

INCAPABLE OF MEANNESS,

BLAZING WITH INDIGNATION AT ALL KINDS OF WRONG,

HIS HEART AND MIND DEEP AND WIDE AS

THE OCEAN AT HIS DOOR,

SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT AS A CHILD,

KEEN WITH ALL THE KEENNESS OF HIS RACE,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED
BY A BROTHER ACROSS THE WATER,

WHO CHERISHES HIS FRIENDSHIP AS A

TREASURE LAID UP IN HEAVEN,

AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

A. W.

“It is not error which opposes the progress of truth : it is indolence, obstinacy, the spirit of routine, everything that favours inaction.”

P R E F A C E.

FOR centuries the world has been listening to sermons, and, while cheerfully dispensing with the hour-glass, can listen to them still. Occasionally, also, it reads them, not quite unwisely, for a good sermon is, without dispute, the most convenient method possible for conveying to busy men, in a compact and luminous summary, the facts, and ideas, and principles, and aspirations which are the only reasonable explanation of the existence of the Church, as well as of the religion of her Divine Head.

Preachers, if they are wise, and conscious of their limitations, will usually be found to be even greedy readers of sermons, whereby they seize and retain the inspiration of the loftier spirits, and become fired with the glow and heat of saintly thinkers, in whom the love of Christ and the passion for souls burn with an unquenchable fire. They will also be only too thankful to discover and master those minor details of style and arrangement, which some who think more highly of themselves than they ought to think may flippantly despise as technical rudiments, but which the wise will almost eagerly appreciate as helping them more adequately to use the grandest opportunity man ever vouchsafes to man, for the delivery, without interruption,

save, at the worst, of an ill-concealed weariness in his hearers, of a message about which nothing higher can be said than that it is Divine.

One, however, who presumes not only to preach sermons but to publish them, will, if reasonably modest, never quite acquit himself, in those moments of reaction with which we are all so familiar, of an incredible rashness in doing so; will also be conscious of a secret trepidation lest all that is in his volume, recognizable as actually his own, should be blandly pronounced by the critics as hardly deserving of the permanence desired for it; while anything found in it that is readable, or striking, or profound, should presently be disinterred from some forgotten volume, as having been much better expressed by some one else.

It is perhaps fair to observe, that to be a preacher, one must first be a student; and a student is one who, while he should ever be conscious of his indebtedness to others, and sincerely grateful to them, cannot always be expected to remember where or when this or that thought became assimilated to his own mental consciousness, and was put away among his other treasures, without a label to mark from whom it was first borrowed. A man of genius of our own time has said, "One could not open one's lips, if one was bound to say what nobody else had said." In this volume—the title and subjects of which will, I trust, sufficiently justify themselves—I have honestly done my best to acknowledge my obligation to those whose help I recognize, and for whose writings I have a sincere gratitude. The Book, of course, to which one wishes to owe most, is the Word of God. If, however, of two out of many other authors—both of them now in their rest—I might express the hope that here and there these humble

pages may be found to gleam with their serene wisdom and their magnificent aspirations, I may be permitted to acknowledge what a debt for many years past I have felt to owe to the refined and wide culture of Richard William Church, once Dean of St. Paul's; as well as to Phillips Brooks, late Bishop of Massachusetts, who, more than any preacher I know, takes his hearers by the hand, to bring them into the living presence and to the personal love and to the ineffable vision of Jesus, Son of God.

A. W.

FARNHAM CASTLE,
Easter, 1893.

“True Catholicity can never come about as the result of an eclectic or a levelling process. It never was, or will be, made to order.”

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OUR INDEBTEDNESS.

“Lord, I am coming as fast as I can. I know I must pass through the shadow of death, before I can come to see Thee. But it is but Umbra Mortis, a mere shadow of death, a little darkness upon nature. But Thou, through Thy merits and Passion, hast broken through the jaws of death.”—*Archbishop Laud's last words on the scaffold.*

OUR INDEBTEDNESS.

Preached in St. James's, Winnipeg, August 12, 1887.

“I am debtor.”—ROM. i. 14.

FAIRLY, I think, and not cynically, the world may be divided into two classes. One is of those who are constantly occupied with considering what society owes to them; the other is of those who are even more anxious to discover what they owe to society. We need not pause to inquire which of these two classes is the more numerous, or the nobler, or to which mankind owes more of truth and virtue, or to which of them St. Paul belonged. For it is, of course, quite fair to remark that as a Hebrew, and an apostle, he must have felt this sense of indebtedness in an especial degree.

As a member of an essentially missionary race, chosen by God to be salt and light amidst corruption and darkness, and to be the depository of the divine oracles until, in the fulness of time, Christ should come in the flesh to explain and fulfil them, he was a debtor from, and even by reason of, his birth. Then, as an apostle, to whom the Lord Himself gave the commission to declare the glad tidings of reconciliation to the Gentiles, he apparently felt the blessed necessity of preaching the gospel as perhaps no man ever

felt it before or since. "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!"

Now, from the particular duty I want instantly to pass to the universal obligation. The Church's conscience is stirred by an unspeakable gratitude to her great task of evangelizing the nations. Let each of us, in the solitary and invisible region of his own conscience, ponder for himself the meaning of this sentence, "I am debtor;" apply to his own soul the wide obligation of it, "How much owe I unto my Lord?" try to weigh its blessedness, "I owe Thee my life;" and to conceive its mighty reward for him, if ever so feebly, yet consistently and resolutely, it shall have coloured and shaped his years. "I am debtor."

Observe here the secret of God, the burden of the Church, the safety of the nation, the enthusiasm of the Christian.

What is the debt? It is, superficially to speak of it, threefold, and I can only indicate, not pretend to expound, its substance. Truth, example, and charity. That man owes truth to man; and that just in proportion to his own apprehension of the value of it, and his personal appropriation of the substance of it, and his recognition of the need of it for all, to cheer, elevate, dignify, develop, and complete human nature, will be his readiness, even at personal cost, to dispense it to others. A university is, of course, the most majestic embodiment of the idea that truth is the inheritance of the race—that only the learner can claim to be the teacher—and that the best and noblest hospitality is the hospitality of the mind, joyfully welcoming all men into its temple of knowledge. But any elementary school for the humblest and poorest is but the development of that principle to its final logical issues. Then, if the great truths of physics, and mathematics, and philosophy, and history,

which fill human life and thought with dignity and power and gladness, are to be passed on as readily and constantly and cheaply as possible to those whom they concern, how much more those vast spiritual truths, which express the only realities, which help us to see through the veil that separates the visible from the invisible, the present from the future and the past, telling us of a divine order running through our lives, of the mind and purpose of God about us, of mercy and judgment, of the way of peace, of the hope laid up for us in heaven, when earth, with its sins, and cares, and troubles, and battles, is behind us, and we see God !

Another part of our debt is example—the daily, unconscious, natural, yet often supernatural exhibition of simple unconscious goodness. “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” We here to-day may have already experienced this, almost without knowing it. Nothing is so helpful in a great congregation of worshippers as reverence. Can we have too much of it? It suddenly recalls the listless, summons the indevout to self-recollection, silently rebukes the distracted, stirs the devotion even of the worshipping heart to cleave nearer to God. So, on the other hand, how easily may souls be chilled, tempted, hardened by continuous and deliberate irreverence ! There is nothing so irresistible as a good example ; nothing that is more in our own power ; nothing, also, to which our obligation is so supreme.

Charity is the other part of our debt, in relations and proportions and degrees which justice compels, observation indicates, and occasion supplies. Oh, if this were but more constantly recognized, if we would, all of us, be more willing to understand how much the happiness and good-

ness of others is in our power, just through our showing them kindness, what a changed world this might be! "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." That debt, who pays fully? and how few consent to owing it, much less attempt to discharge it! But whether we know it or not, care for it or not, we do owe each other charity, and men expect it of us, and God will judge us about it; and the best proof of the righteousness of the claim is, that we feel it a real wrong if it is denied to ourselves.

So much for the debt.

But to whom is the debt owed?

First let me observe, in passing, that we owe ourselves a debt. The debt, I mean, of subjecting the lower to the higher nature, the senses to the spirit, inclination to duty, the immediate present to the far-distant future. Unless man holds himself in constant and intelligent check, is distinctly conscious of the dual forces in his moral being, resolving which of them shall be supreme, and careful to make the spiritual supreme, he may save himself the trouble of inquiring who outside of him have claims upon him; for they are claims that will never be recognized, much less be paid.

But, our personal responsibility apart, it is to God and our neighbour that our debt is due. To God, who reveals truth that we may believe and assimilate it, who proclaims righteousness that we may recognize and desire it, who invites love that we may surrender Him our hearts. Who shall attempt to measure the greatness of our debt to God? As our Maker, He appeals to our conscience; as our Father, He demands our affections. The earth is full of His mercy, and into each of our mouths doth He constantly put a new song. Of course, the two great mercies, the one transcending

our intelligence, and the other exhausting our hopes, are the possession of His divine image, in however a soiled and fragmentary way; with that which is essentially bound up with it, our hope—may I not say our sense?—of immortality.

I quite admit that, but for these two inestimable and undeniable blessings, it might be easy enough to show that human life is not worth the living. Most of you would concur in that. But to be made in the likeness of God, and to have the hope of the fruition of His glorious Godhead in life everlasting, is a mercy indeed; and the first thought that should meet us at waking, the central thought that should occupy us among the absorbing and varied activities of the day, the last thought that should solemnize us before we fall asleep, should be—To God, all-wise, almighty, all-good, “I am debtor.” Shall I rob God?

But we are also debtors to man. You remember, of course, how a lawyer once tried to evade Christ’s comprehensive precept about loving with the question, “Who is my neighbour?” and how wonderfully yet unanswerably Christ, in the parable of the good Samaritan, replied. He is my neighbour who needs me, whose need I come across, know and have power to satisfy without injustice to the nearer claims of others. Brethren, brethren, it is a tremendous, almost an appalling, thought how much we owe each other, and how little aware of it many of us seem to be.

What a debt of truth we owe, in the social intercourse we enjoy, whether in the opinions we propound, or in the books we read, or in the commonest words we say! What a debt of example to all those into whose company we

pass, so frequently, so thoughtlessly, and whom all of us more or less potently influence to a degree we can hardly tell, but shall one day be judged for. The children who watch us, the domestics who attend on us, the neighbours who consort with us, the friends whose very love gives our behaviour a persuasive power,—all these more or less are affected by the moral atmosphere which every human being inevitably takes with him wherever he goes.

And then there are the millions beyond, whether in our own empire, or other Christian lands, or among the vast peoples of heathendom. Have we nothing to do with them—have they nothing to claim from us? If the Hebrew race was the missionary nation of the world before the Advent, judging from the extent of her dominion, the pervasiveness of her commerce, the spread of her language, the greatness of her resources, the grandeur of her name, and the multitude of her opportunities, Britain is the missionary nation of the world between the Advents. May she not despise herself in despising the souls committed to her keeping! May she say to India and Africa and China, and to the uttermost islands of the sea, “I am debtor”!

But the easiest part of my task is done—the part to which none will demur who call themselves Christians.

Now I have to show—what Christian folk everywhere have to learn—the secret of the sense of indebtedness. “I am debtor,” but do I feel it, and do I care for it? Is the debt too great for me even to begin to try to pay it, or too remote for God to expect it of me; a precept as much above my reach as a fixed star, as much outside my conscience as the paganism of Julius Cæsar; or, indeed, if recognized as a sort of duty, recognized just out of its burdensomeness, approached with reluctance, handled with

levity, and dismissed with joy? The secret of it all is in discovering our real relation to those who claim our duty from us, and thereby and entirely transforming the burden and difficulty of what may prove a real sacrifice into a motive and force of life.

The great fact of redemption is the true key to it all. For it shows us at once the real value of our own being, and the worth of our fellow-men, and the clearness and loveliness of God. When I see at what cost I have been redeemed, and for what purpose, I find it worth while to subdue and to discipline myself for what is to come out of it. If my citizenship is in heaven, and I am on my way there, I can wait, and it is worth my while.

“The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” The character which I am building, the purpose which I am accomplishing, the mind which I am cultivating, the motives which I am accepting, are all weaving the vestment of my immortality. “The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” If God has set such a price upon me, let me assent to it, and respect myself, and live as becomes one who is the brother of His incarnate Son.

So with my fellow-man, whoever he be, or by whatever name he may be called. How can I despise him, for Jesus shares his nature? how can I despair of him, for Jesus has redeemed his life? The awful verity of the Incarnation casts an incredible and ineffable dignity on the very meanest human soul. The Papuan savage, the Chippewa Indian, the Malay pirate, the ferocious Arab of the Soudan, the filthiest and roughest child out of a London gutter, all share the nature with which it has pleased the Eternal Son of

God to invest His Divine Personality—have as much right to call him Kinsman according to the flesh as St. Paul had. But observe how much nearer am I thereby brought to them. How much easier is it for me to care for them when, not only through our common humanity, but by our one redemption, we are doubly kinsfolk, as fellow-heirs of God! And God—how dear and glorious He becomes, when we humbly meditate on Him in the light of the fact of redemption! The awfulness of our sin and the infiniteness of His love are alike made manifest in the shame and anguish of the Cross.

“I gave My life for thee ;
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave my life for thee :
What hast thou given for Me ?”

It may have happened to some of you, in your own glorious continent, to have been travelling by night through a sublime and beautiful country. At first all was shrouded in the thick darkness—though the beauty was there, and you felt it. Now and then, to be sure, you caught the quick white flash of a great waterfall, or, as the train thundered over a bridge, you could hear the rushing of the deep river far below ; sometimes you had a glimpse of thick forest, sometimes you were conscious of hastening past great drifts of snow. You fell asleep, and when you woke all was changed. The peaks of the grave mountains were touched in the rosy light, and a fair landscape, beautified, almost created by the sunrise, glitt red and smiled around you. All your senses had their full scope of enjoyment ; you seemed suddenly to have passed into a new and living world.

Just so is it when the fact of redemption, grasped and

tasted in the personal consciousness of it, throws its inspiring splendour upon the value and destiny of mankind.

“Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” is no doubt the first, the abstract, the overwhelming difficulty, when we remember that this tiny planet of ours is but as a speck of light in an immeasurable universe of worlds; and yet we are quietly invited to believe that He who by the breath of His mouth called that universe into being, became a creature—suffered and died for this insignificant human race.

But the gospel outside us responds to the gospel within us; the testimony of man confirms the salvation of God. Man is redeemed, and he knows it; and because man is precious to God, man must be precious to his brother. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.”

My brethren, believe me, this is the true motive of Christian missions, and there is no other. If that will not stir and touch us, the sight of Jesus on a second cross would fail likewise.

An objection is sometimes made to Christian missions—you, I am sure, do not make it, and it is disappearing, though it has not yet disappeared—that missions to the heathen are premature, while so much of the Church’s work at home remains almost hopelessly unfulfilled. No words of mine can be needed to wither in a sentence an objection at once so silly and so base. So base, because what it really means is, that the neglect of our duty at home justifies the neglect of our duty abroad, and that the consciousness of our sin

in the past is to perpetuate it in the future.¹ So silly, for as the Church history of the last century shows us, the awakening of the Church's conscience as to her duties with the heathen abroad has a distinct reciprocal effect in the stirring of home effort among the masses in England. This century of evangelistic effort abroad has also been the century of stirred Church sympathy, quickened devotion, expanded organization, deepened reverence, national education, multiplied churches, almost recreated diocesan life. The English Church, in this year of grace 1887, is something so amazingly different in its methods, activities, and devotion from the Church of 1787, that the best way of explaining it is that God has given us a second Pentecost. As a matter of fact, too, those who aid missionary enterprise abroad are the same men who push missionary effort at home, while it only too often happens that those who deprecate foreign missions in the interest of home activities are admirably impartial in aiding neither.

Have you, however, a misgiving that the people do not much care for the gospel; that they would greatly prefer to be left as they are, with their ancient idolatries, their pleasant vices, and their earthly life?² Do you remind me, that when the man of Macedonia appeared to our apostle in a vision, asking him to come over and help him, when he went he had not much of a welcome? At Philippi they threw him into prison, Thessalonica he had to leave by night to avoid violence, Athens met him with polite scorn? Ah! but you have not got the true key to that vision. That man of Macedonia represented the heathen of Europe as they were present to the mind and heart of God. He knew

¹ See Bishop Phillips Brooks' "The Candle of the Lord," p. 167.

² Ibid., p. 94.

the capacities and possibilities in them. He saw the moral faculties sleeping there, but ready to be aroused at the sound of His Son's gospel. He knew His own purpose about them, and the opportunities He was preparing for them—the depth of His own love, and the power of the Spirit He would bestow. The end of it all was that Europe was won to the Cross, of which you and I here are some of the results. What He did then, He will do now. What man was then, he is now. The gospel is the same, and we are not to be ashamed of it, “for it is the power of God unto salvation.” Sin is the same—in its misery, degradation, and bondage; and the only deliverance from it is in welcoming the yoke of Christ, to be Master and Saviour of the soul.

Lastly, the objection scorned and the misgiving removed, there is the duty. Shame on the Church, that it should still be the duty! Blessing for us, if we will transform, through grateful love, this plain duty into a happy joy! My brethren, I want to send every one of you home to-day, myself as the rest, with this thought, murmuring restlessly in your heart, “How much owe I unto my Lord?” “I am debtor.”

At the beginning of another century of Church life, I want you to get a new insight into Christ's love, a fresh discovery of your own mercies, a more eager purpose to use the opportunities that still remain.

If we only rightly understand it, we shall see that what we call the missionary spirit is but an essential and indispensable feature of the regenerate life. We have been saved that we may save; taught, that we may teach; blessed, that we may share our blessings; consoled, that we may go to the mourner and with gentle hand wipe away his tears.

Begin at home, with truth, example, and charity. Beware of Pharisaism; also beware of uselessness. Where you cannot speak, you can pray. And the perfectly cogent argument is the persistence of love. Then, as the circles of your sympathy expand, so will your opportunities. You will see many, which you do not even suspect now; and to see, will be to use. And be sure, each of you—pardon me if I am overbold with you—to take some share in the missionary work of the Church.

In your common daily life, in the discharge of your ordinary duties, when cares oppress you or friends leave you, when your sky darkens or infirmity makes you sad, ever try to learn the wonderful secret of abiding peace, in a stirred and grateful numbering of your mercies. The way to win joy is to make sacrifices; and if ever you are tempted to think, as we all are occasionally, that you are forgotten and others remembered, say to yourselves our apostle's sentence, "I am debtor," and the sense of indebtedness will bring back the glow of love.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

“The first necessity of religion is that it should be religious.”

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

Preached in Cuddesdon Parish Church, June 14, 1892.

“Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.”—ACTS xxvi. 19.

IF the key to the importance of an event is the result that comes from it, the measure of the value of a life is its influence when it is done. If the middle-aged live in the present, and are apt to be absorbed in it; if the old live in the past, and, as the case may be, either reproach themselves unreasonably for what they could not help, or unduly glorify themselves for what would equally have happened without them, the young live in the future, and if they act as well as dream, dig in the earth as well as build in the air, who shall justly blame them? Imagination, with all its admitted perils, has a distinct and reasonable influence on human conduct. “We are saved by hope.” “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” By the visions of faith, and the diffidence that grows out of experience, and the sense of capacity, and the grace of God, we feel our way, and see our duty, and fill our place, and perfect our life. In the passage before us, the apostle tells Agrippa that he had not been disobedient to his heavenly vision. Agrippa, if

he was listening, may have felt puzzled. We, at the end of eighteen centuries, observing that that heavenly vision has transformed the face of the world, and that the king's name survives only because for a brief hour it came into contact with that of Saul of Tarsus, are better able to measure the value of the obedience, and of the vision to which it was rendered ; may also have come to see that in a very real and lofty sense every true son of God, and every commissioned herald of His gospel, will have heavenly visions of some kind, though not by dreams or trances ; that each will have his own, answering to his gifts and capacities ; and that they will come when they are wanted. On these visions, and what they mean for us, I wish to speak to you this morning.

Our visions, among other things they do for us, test and measure, and in a sense prepare us for a life in which, like St. Paul, He who counts us worthy of it—while He is even quick to dispel the visions that are of earth and self—will little by little, and very gently, unfold to us what great things we must suffer, and perhaps do, for His name's sake. It is a poor and tame soul that has no visions. It is a shallow and ill-balanced one that is for long unsteadied by them. There are many of them, and of differing value ; and they open out one by one in the vistas of the gathering years before the listening conscience of the dutiful servant. If they have not begun for us yet, we are not fit for duty ; if they are all over for us, our duty is finished. Yet of all of us, be we only true men, it may be said that we stand between two visions—one behind, and one in front ; one which has come to us, one which is sure to come,—the vision of the Personal Christ, who, we humbly trust, has chosen and called us,

that we should labour with Him for the salvation of the world; the other, the tremendous vision of judgment, when the task to which we have given ourselves is over, the opportunities gone, the past irrevocable, the record filled, the eternity made; when the sheep and lambs of Christ, over whom in His mercy He made us overseers, and about whom He will ask us, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" will all have passed within the veil to see God, and to find themselves, and to give their account of us.

Of the *four* great visions which more or less seize the imagination and fire the heart of Christ's ministers, *first*, surely, comes the vision which summons us to be the living voice of the divine oracles, the ministers of reconciliation between God and men. This was *Isaiah's* vision. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Who can exaggerate the solemnity of this call, or the issues that hang on it, or the blessedness of being faithful to it, or the misery of some day repenting that it had ever been made? I suppose the soundest condition of heart is that which, like *Isaiah's*, while it is abashed by the loftiness of the service, shrinks yet more from the baseness of refusing it because it is lofty—in the end, fired with the joy of salvation, quite surrenders itself to Christ.

Our *second* vision—it recurs again and again—is the vision that sends us. It points us to the place where we are to labour, and to the people whom we are to serve, and to the fellows with whom our work is to be done, and it may be to the fathers and elders who are to train us in doing it. This vision touches at once the wisdom and the righteousness of God, the fruitfulness and faithfulness of

men. St. Paul is our pattern here. "After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia : but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night ; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." This second vision is not, indeed, to supersede the usual methods of what we call Providence, so much as to provoke our dutiful attention to them. Instead of bidding us abdicate our faculties of conscience and reason, it honourably recognizes them by compelling their exercise. To be invited to any duty does not necessarily imply that we are to accept it ; simply that we are to be at the pains of thinking about it. Eagerness has its risks as well as supineness, and impetuosity as much as a chilled heart. Among the servants of Christ there will always be at least two classes,—the men who instantly obey duty, and the men who instinctively consult inclination ; the men who at once turn to God and say, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"—the men whose one anxiety is to discover what is pleasantest. We must not, indeed, say that inclination is always to be sternly repressed, as if it were in no sense an indication of our fitness for a duty. To be attracted to duty is to be far on the road for doing it. Certainly, however, it must be listened to with reserve, and cross-examined with severity. Also it is true that the beautiful enthusiasm which rushes to identify the invitation of man with the summons of God must not too lightly claim our apostle as an authority. It presents the heroic side of life—and we need to have it presented, or

heroes would soon become extinct ; but sometimes it creates woeful reactions for itself, and so Mark goes back to Jerusalem, and Demas forsakes St. Paul. It is our duty to think as well as our glory to love. Nevertheless it is a poor and almost sordid nature that calculates too nicely, and claims too rigorously to see the conclusion of its choice. An apostle suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ. It has been finely said by one at whose feet some of you in past Oxford days may have rejoiced to sit, "Venture is an element in most things that are worth doing, and is a condition of all spiritual progress."¹ "Slackness for good" is one of the perils of our time ; and there is a baseness of soul in it. Do you remember what Dean Church says of Sordello? "If the good had come to him of itself, he would gladly have taken it. But he had not the will to imagine it, to seek it ; and so his noble and beautiful nature, with all its grand possibilities, sank into uselessness and forgetfulness, placed among those who had great opportunities and great thoughts, —the men of great chances and great failures."

The *third* vision comes to deepen, widen, expand, mature us, turning youth into manhood, and summoning us to the midsummer of life. It was *St. Peter's* at Joppa. The vessel descending out of heaven with all manner of fourfooted beasts, and the accompanying voice, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," and the significant monition, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," had set the apostle thinking and wondering, when suddenly the messengers of Cornelius stood at his door, and the Spirit saith unto him, "Behold, three men seek thee." That vision, as we know, with all that came out of it, meant the im-

¹ Dean Paget.

mediate opening of the Gentile world to Christ. It was also a new era of idea, of duty, of conquest for the apostle. The struggle it must have meant for a conscientious Hebrew Christian it is very hard for us adequately to measure. But growth with pain is the very principle of life; pain not only of body, but of soul—not only of soul, but of mind. You whom I would for a moment address, the younger among us—if you are at all like what we your fathers were—nay, let me add, if you are what those who truly care for you sincerely wish you to be—will be ardent in your ideas, tenacious of your articles of faith, resentful of divergencies from your personal standpoint of conviction, as if they implied a sort of injustice or disrespect. But you have yet to discover, as we in front of you are continually discovering, that we can never here know more than a mere fragment of truth, and that imperfectly; that the more you attain of real knowledge, the more dissatisfied you will be with it; and that the secret of a kindly toleration of the errors of others, is the consciousness of needing it for your own. Well, to you who are coming up so rapidly after us, who will fill our places, and take our honours, and occupy our chairs, and perhaps improve our methods, when we are gone and out of mind—whom we watch with no austerity, and love with no grudging affection—epochs will soon come, may even be coming now, when, if you are honest and fresh-minded, and greatly in love with truth, windows will be opened in your souls, through which will stream visions of truth, and duty, and sacrifice, and enterprise, hidden from you now, as the summit of some lofty alp from children in their games in the valley. Your spirit may have a sore travail-time, but you will pass through it into a higher region, and life will henceforth seem made new for

you. Men whom once you could hardly think of kindly will have a new preciousness in your eyes ; and the austere, perhaps unconscious, disdain which once shut you off from them, as with a sort of frozen winding-sheet, will be softened by the discovery that they too are the sons of God, perhaps nearer His face than yourselves. Truths which once had no meaning for you will slowly open out their beauty ; events which had no significance for you will sparkle and glitter with a new brightness. You will not have thrown away the past. It is still yours, to be for ever yours. But you will have added to it ; for God has spoken, and that is enough. It is a tremendous moment when it comes, for often it changes all the life, and always raises us to a new level of thought and joy and service.

For truth is something to be passed on. The souls we have to reach and win for Christ are of all sorts and conditions : the ignorant who know their ignorance, and are content with it ; the ignorant who do not know their ignorance, and who mistake it for knowledge ; the lettered, and pleasure-seeking, and careless, who live in quite another world to ours, and who, if they ever step across into ours, quickly go back with a sort of amused disdain. We have to deal with an infinite variety of character, and occupation, and opportunity, and environment,—all factors in the ever-maturing process of the final destiny ; all more or less assimilating and transfusing into their own invisible life what comes to them from these lives and lips of ours. Well might the wise man say, “He that winneth souls is wise.” Well might Jesus say, that the secret of winning them can only be learnt in following Him. Well, too, may all of us remember that the compensation for His absence, the promise of His Father, the secret of all our power, is

in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For, as a great American preacher has observed, the two instruments with which we have to win them—or, to change the figure, the two spheres which we must persuade them to enter—are truth and love. They must be both together, for they are incomplete apart. There is but small profit in giving them truth, if they do not feel that you give it them because you love them. There is still less use in loving them, if you only stir their emotions, and keep back those great verities by which men live, and see, and receive, and enjoy God, and which, as the Church's witnesses and servants, you are to sow in their hearts unto eternal life.

The *fourth* vision is the vision which *inspires*. It was *St. John's*. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." This vision sustains because it inspires, for it makes us hope about our work when we are gone. "One soweth, and another reapeth." Some of you whom I am addressing may not need it now—you may not need it for years to come; but sooner or later, if you are true, and your hearts alive for your Lord's glory, and you have the reward of disappointment, and hope deferred makes your heart sick (and would you wish not to be disappointed, and to take defeat easily, and to see your flock wandering, and not to care?), the tempter will tempt you; and it will be despondency, not presumption, that he will suggest; and perhaps it may not be till quite middle life, when the old buoyancy is ebbing, that the question will come, "Is my gospel true; is my Lord faithful; is my life fruitful; is my ministry a power?" The hands of the strongest will some-

times hang down, and the knees of the swift wax feeble. The greatest of the Old Testament prophets asked, "Who hath believed our report?" The greatest of the New Testament prophets sent to inquire of Christ, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" To St. Paul himself came once a dark hour, when his only solace was prayer, his only consolation the sufficient grace of God.

Brethren, be sure, and do not fear to be assured, that to you, to me, to us all, there may come, nay, if we travail for souls, and have our Lord's kingdom at heart, and lament our own weakness, and deeply feel how personal unworthiness limits the activities of God, there will come clouds and darkness, shadows and gloominess, and they will sorely try you; and that is just what they are meant for, and presently they will pass. But may I tell you how to help them to pass? "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." There can be, here at least, no joy without tears—the right tears; but a good many tears will be well and everlastingly recompensed by the first glimpse of the King in His beauty. All true work shall have its reward, by the self-acting laws of the heavenly kingdom, though we must be content to wait for it. Root it, however, deeply into your hearts, that no prayer, or truth, or sacrifice, or charity, or smile on a little child, or a cup of cold water to a lonely heart, or a joy surrendered, or a hope quenched, shall miss its just, its inevitable, its magnificent recompense. "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Some of it we have even here and now, and we know it. The best shall be revealed at the coming of the King.

Three last thoughts let me press on you, conscious of my tediousness and ashamed about it.

1. Let us *each be ourselves*. Let us grasp, accentuate, develop our own personality; expect, receive, and follow our own vision from on high. Let us have our own scheme of life, our own methods of duty, our own ideals of goodness, our own devotion to Christ, premising only that they are generous, practicable, and complete. The holy angels are all around us to-day, our hearts are full of tender sympathy with each other, and sympathy means intercession. He who walks among the seven golden candlesticks, and who holds the seven stars in His right hand, and who meets you to-day in this holy place, consecrated by so many blessed associations, endeared by so many tender memories, waits to fill you with the love that passeth knowledge. We cannot measure the honour of serving Him, or the bliss of seeing Him, when life is done. He asks each of us again, "Lovest thou Me?" He bids each of us again, "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs."

Again, by three things shall we see God, and be capable of apprehending the heavenly vision, and so serve Him. They are the best things on earth. Oh that we were at more pains to understand their blessedness! They are worship, truth, and character. These are the greatest forces under the sun, and the mightiest blessings. They are ours, as much as we care to make them so, whether for use or for duty. We know that it is so; and to know it, awes the heart as well as thrills it. Let us bring the awe and the joy as our offering to Him to-day.

Lastly, let us look forward and upward, and greatly hope, because we have a divine commission from a divine Master, to a divine society and for a divine end. We are part of a vast and mighty procession, of which the beginning and the end are out of sight, on our solemn and separate

way to the city of God. We are not alone : on the right and on the left, behind us and in front of us, visible and invisible, humble and faithful souls swell our ranks and chant our triumph. We think tenderly and thankfully to-day, among others, of Samuel Wilberforce and John Mackarness, Henry Liddon and James Denison—names ever to be venerated in this place, and ever loved, who have finished their course, and, we humbly trust, have received their welcome, and they rest from their labours.

Their visions are over ; ours are not yet over. May they never cease to be over until the conflict is over and our work done. Then the visions of this present time, which is but for a moment, shall be exchanged for the glorious joy unspeakable and full of glory.

“ Ever the richest, tenderest glow
Sets round the autumnal sun ;
But then sight fails : no heart may know
The bliss when life is done.”

DISCIPLINE.

“ Character precedes power.”

DISCIPLINE.

Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, February 27, 1887.

“And he took the fire in his hand, and a knife ; and they went both of them together.”—GEN. xxii. 6.

OLD Testament history gives us more than one glimpse of a pair of kindred souls, walking side by side on a journey with vast issues, knowing that they must soon say farewell, and dreading unspeakably the moment of saying it ; the one to be taken, and the other left. Moses and Aaron go up Mount Hor. The elder brother is to die there, and there is a penalty in his dying. The younger and the greater is to strip him of his high priest's garment, and to put it on Eleazar his son, and then to watch him die ; and to go down the mountain without him, soon to be laid in a lonely grave of his own. Two prophets stand together by Jordan. The elder has striven in vain to be alone in his last moments ; the younger, divining what he must presently lose, will see the last of his master Elijah, and so catches on his own eager and yet reverent spirit the glow of the heavenly fire in which the mighty prophet passes up to God. Here are father and son. The father is he in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. The son is the child of promise, so long waited for, welcomed with such passionate delight. They are

walking side by side, and the mystery of an awful secret divides them. My friends, was there ever journey like that journey; ever a trial like that which, as with the piercing of a sword, searched Abraham? Saint he was, but still a man; servant of God, if ever there was one, yet at once husband and father. To Sarah, in that doubtless indulged errand, he must have been tempted to feel guilty of a great treachery. The very sight of the son, who so absolutely trusted him with an unsuspecting love, and happy face, and buoyant step, under that cruel load, must have stirred in his heart an untold anguish.

Divines, some of them men whose writings have made an epoch in theology, have loved to formulate with more or less acuteness and research the doctrinal value of this pathetic incident.

Some observe in it the striking concurrence, such as never could happen again, of the recognized absoluteness of parental authority, the ever-present vivid sense of the supernatural, as a constant reasonable factor in human affairs, and of the supreme majesty of the divine will when once distinctly asserting itself over every other consideration whatever, whether of moral law, civil enactment, or human love. That heroic obedience has been at once a unique and unparalleled revelation to mankind of the power of faith and the glory of sacrifice.

One thought inspired Abraham—he was doing his duty. One principle underlaid his life—the absolute sovereignty of God. One assurance supported him—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" One hope kept his heart from breaking—"He accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure."

Others, again, have seen in the incident—what, of course, is there—a beautiful though imperfect illustration of that great atoning sacrifice, in which the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Imperfect, however, for our Redeemer clearly foresaw from the beginning of His ministry the death which was to meet Him at the end; imperfect also, for Abraham offered Isaac in will, but not in deed. Our Redeemer not only approached His cross, but died on it.

To some of us, however, it may perhaps be found most instructive as a very real and solemn parable of the constant and blessed discipline of our daily human life, in which, moment by moment, each separate soul, whether conscious of it or unconscious, caring for it or not caring, is being made to pass through the crucible of inexorable circumstance, with a separate life-plan for each to fulfil, and a divine ideal for each to consummate, constantly and separately encompassed by an awful, tender, holy, invisible Presence, waiting to guide, watching to comfort, asking to bless, and able to love.

Let me proceed to expound this truth a little more fully, in some of the ideas which it may be thought to contain.

Every soul has its own road to travel, which no one else travels, or ever can travel. Occasionally it may seem to be in company with others; in a sense it is. Often it is solitary. Yet never quite solitary; for ever there stands at its side one to guide and to strengthen: and his form is like the Son of God.

Each human soul is on its way to its own Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem has its own appointed Moriah.

On each of us God lays and fastens, as Abraham laid and fastened on Isaac, the burden of our future, which,

whatever it may be, and for as long as He bids us, we must be content to bear. We cannot change it ; it would be a great folly to wish to change it. We may not drop it ; for in carrying it is at once the fulfilment of our destiny and the training for our eternity.

Our character and our circumstances shape its career, develop its activities, and mature its capacity. Each man is himself, and need not feebly desire to be any other man. God has His own thought of him, and will help him to accomplish it.

As Abraham walked with Isaac, Christ our Lord walks with us. But, perhaps most solemn thought of all, in His hand, as in Abraham's hand, is the fire and the knife for the burnt offering. We remember that it is the pierced hand, and we know it will be gentle with us, touched by the recollection of His own experience. He felt the fire, and the sharpness of the knife. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. He lays no burden on us that He has not first borne Himself—He, our Prince and Saviour. But the fire and the knife mean pain ; and though sometimes the sacrifice at the last moment is spared us, as Abraham at the last moment was spared the awful misery of slaying his son—to look at it, and come up to it, and make up our mind for it, is to drain the cup of half of its bitterness. Nay, after having once steadily faced it, we never are quite the same afterwards.

Again, each soul is continually to offer itself to God—as Isaac offered himself to Abraham—as a living sacrifice, and as a burnt sacrifice ; not for expiation, but in self-consecration ; not to pay a debt, but to confess it. St. Paul calls it our “reasonable service.” The essence of the sacrifice, and the secret of it, is in the will.

The fire and the knife are the two methods of the divine discipline. Sometimes both together, sometimes apart, sometimes at long intervals; never quite done with till we are in the sinless land. The fire means, through the various dispensations and ministries of grace, the personal dealing of God the Holy Ghost with the soul, of whom it is written that He is the "Spirit of burning," about whom it was promised that Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. "Every one shall be salted with fire," said Christ. It is the convincing, purifying, searching, self-revealing work of God on the conscience and mind and heart, often very humbling and terrible in its revelation of our own sinfulness and the Divine Holiness—the coming near to us, close to us, of Him who is expressly described as a consuming fire; who hereafter is to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire; who even now is trying the work of His servants by fire to see of what sort it is; whose "eyes are as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," and of whom one of His own sayings is reported, "He that is near Me, is near fire."

The knife is the discipline of separation, in that Divine Providence which rules over us all. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." Sometimes, if we will not do it for ourselves, He does it for us. Yet it is not always things that offend that are thus cast away. There are hidden reasons for many of God's dealings with us, about which an honest conscience is properly slow to accuse itself, and about which the mind, admitting that it is a mystery, waits to know until the dawning of the day. This knife of God cuts off many things; as life goes on,

seems busier and busier with its work. Health, or money, or the blessed opportunity of usefulness, or a life which is so bound up with our own, that the knife which severs one thread, half cuts through the other. If man's dignity is in his thinking, his greatness is in his loving. The noble penalty of loving much, is suffering much. Not to mourn is not to care.

Once more, the difference between one man and another is, not that one man has his burden bound on his back, and another man has no burden. Each man has his own burden. Nor, again, that one man has a divine Friend at his side to care for him and discipline him, and another man has no such friend. Christ is the Saviour of the world, and the Head of every man. Nor, again, is it true that for one man there is the fire and the knife in the divine hand, and not for another. Every man in turn feels the scorching of the fire, and shudders at the glitter of the knife as it cuts him. God is for all, and therefore all suffer. The difference is, that some see their Lord at their side, and some will not see Him—nay, say that there is no Lord to see. Some accept the discipline as the purpose of an unspeakable love, and though intensely feeling it, and honestly wishing it away, welcome it for what it means; say, though not instantly or easily, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"—manfully suffer themselves, when the time comes for it, to watch the altar building on which they are to be offered, climb it, lay down on it, bound hand and foot, saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;" while others moan, and rebel, and struggle, and refuse to recognize the love, accept the discipline, or obey the law, or trust the Saviour, and pushing Christ away from them as of old, say, "What have we to do with Thee,

Jesus, Thou Son of God? art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

To conclude. St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, gloried in "the marks of the Lord Jesus" on his flesh; claimed on account of them, and as a kind of recognition of them, freedom, respect, and consideration. "Henceforth let no man trouble me." Every real life, in exact proportion to its intenseness, leaves its mark both on body and soul. The thinker, the soldier, the statesman, the priest, sometimes carry their profession on their brow. But the soul has its marks too, which we shall recognize and admire in eternity. "The Lamb as it had been slain" will be adored by the countless multitudes for whom He was slain; those who have come out of great tribulation shall have their marks as well. My brethren, have not you sometimes felt conscious, when some great trial was trying and purging your inmost soul, of a closer and more direct presence of your Lord, and of a sort of new dignity, and independence, and courage, and supremacy coming out of it? You may often read it in a man's face, if you know human nature. The littleness of these material things, the greater nearness to the unseen world, and the excellence of glory which fills it, and the fellowship of the saints who worship in it, and the nearness of the King who rules it, are among the real alleviations of even the greatest sorrow. "Death is but an event in life;" and as we see how calmly it is approached, how entirely it is conquered, even in the moment when it seems to be most supreme, the penalty of sin seems to disappear—it has become but the going out of one room in our Father's house into another. Christ's own word comes back to us with an untold force and consolation—"Verily, verily, I

say unto you, He that keepeth My word shall not see death." If only the marks of the fire and the knife are on us, and we wear the scars of our discipline, we claim our reward. Henceforth let no man trouble us ; we will be free.

Another lesson taught us, at least incidentally, from this passage, fully and solemnly all through the Old Testament Scriptures, is that God cannot pass over sin ; that He can by no means clear the guilty, *i.e.* the impenitent guilty ; and that though His Son's cross has expiated its penalty, our own sorrow, suffused with His grace, must be the healing discipline of the soul. The fire and the knife must do their joint duty on us. He did not love the world less before that cross was reared ; He does not claim holiness less now that it has been reared. He loves to pardon, and tells us so, and we need not fear to believe it. But the repentance which is in the will, and desires the pardon, must not be permitted to usurp the place of that penitence which the fire and the knife are continually to produce in us till the end of our days. Because God loves us so much, His one and firm purpose is to deliver us from the power of sin, as well as from the penalty of it, and this must come through the process of sorrow. The gospel of this time is never more shallow and facile and perilous than when it proclaims God to be Love at the expense of His righteousness, or forgets to explain that He most blessedly manifests His love in making us, even at much personal cost, partakers of His holiness. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," but it is to bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Finally, have not you sometimes observed—and it is often a painful mystery, to which the fire and the knife

may be a partial key—that the closing years of some of God's most proved and faithful servants are by no means what we should have expected them to be, calm and bright and fruitful; that the poets presage, "Ever the richest, tenderest glow sets round the autumnal sun," is not always verified; that whether it be broken ideals, or unfinished plans, or interrupted habits, or the inevitable organic decay, or friends dying all around and leaving them alone, the last song in their mouth is not that of the saint of old, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"? It troubles us, for others may misunderstand it, who may not see as we see that God is dealing with them, and showing the things He has not shown them, before they pass to the brightness of His face; also it alarms us, for will it presently happen to ourselves?

Brethren, the first and the last thing is, not to fear anything either for ourselves or for others, but always to trust God, to welcome anything and everything which helps us to be like God. If the fire is needed to purge us, let it purge us. If the knife is needed to separate us from earthly things, let it separate us. We know whom we have believed. Even our Lord once had His hour of darkness, and His sense of loneliness. But it was only for a moment. Let us go on into the future calmly and trustfully, whatever it may have to say to us, knowing that it can only give us fuller and fuller evidence of a perfect wisdom, and of a love which passeth knowledge.

So the fire and the knife may still have their work to do on us, but our comfort is, When we are tried, we shall come forth as gold. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY.

“I do only one thing at a time, and I do it with all my might.”

MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY.

“Able ministers of the New Testament.”—2 COR. iii. 6.

MINISTERIAL efficiency means practical capacity for advancing the kingdom of Christ. We recognize several types of it, which seldom, if ever, are found together: and the standard, which both defines and measures it, is observed to vary from age to age. Here it may be added that, while in special functions of the ministry other religious communions distinctly surpass our own (in technical training we are, perhaps, inferior to all), it is probable that an English clergyman strikes a higher average of general efficiency than any other minister of the gospel. But what is the life, and what the character, on which this efficiency depends? The life is not merely the hours spent in the study, the school, and the church, but the sum-total of it in the dear sanctities of home, in the helpful intercourse of society, in holidays, and in rest. By character is meant that indefinable and inevitable tone and atmosphere of moral nature which, moment by moment, unconsciously but incessantly, forms itself out of our words, thoughts, and deeds; according to the awful proverb (as true of us as of our fellows)—

“Sow the act, and reap the habit;
Sow the habit, and reap the character;
Sow the character, and reap the eternity.”

Sir Joshua Reynolds was in the habit of grounding his canvas with a thick white paint before he drew a single line of his portraits. This gave luminousness to the picture when it was complete. So a clergyman's character shines through his work as well as on it ; it will not be hid, for it cannot be. As Monod writes, in a well-known sermon on St. Paul, "For him the apostle is simply the Christian authorized by God to live for nothing else but to communicate his Christianity to the world ; and then, for the purpose of this communication, endowed with certain supernatural powers, which are a grace of the apostleship, but neither its real essence nor proper strength. In a few lines he gives us the secret of his life as an apostle, to be the secret of his life as a Christian."

What is the secret, in the world around us, of efficiency of any kind, whether artistic, literary, scientific, or political ? Is it not to be found in the combination, more or less perfect, of will, affections, and intelligence, stirred and kept moving by the impulse of conscience, and vitalized by the energy of faith ? The will first resolves on action, and then perseveres in it. The affections, if they do not originate the purpose, intensify it by giving it a motive. The intelligence supplies the resources, having already conceived the ideas. The conscience says, "Thou must : it is thy duty." Faith overcomes all obstacles by the vivid anticipation of success.

Now, the secret of overcoming the world of material things is also the secret of subduing the souls of men to the yoke and cross of Jesus Christ. *We* too must will and know, love, fear, and believe ; and if we first consider what are the prominent functions of our apostolic ministry, and then inquire what special moral characteristics are

severally needful for them, we may find the proposition with which we started quietly working itself out like an actual demonstration ; and the minister of Jesus Christ will be seen to be His faithful servant just in proportion as he is His true disciple. Organization, the pastoral function, public worship, preaching—these, as we shall all agree, constitute the main substance of the ministry committed to us over the souls of men ; and in relation to each one of them the minister will be efficient only so far as he is, first of all, a Christian man. No one will either organize or administer to much purpose without resolute diligence ; but diligence is born of the will : and the pastoral function will never be even a possible daily task, unless the conscience send us forth day by day to tell from house to house that vital and indispensable story, which is the revelation and channel of God : and both to join in public worship, as well as to lead it, there must be devoutness, which means the heart burning : and our message, born from a grave and earnest intelligence that has first seized and apprehended the joy of it before declaring it to others, must be our very best—no mere string of pious remarks about Christ, but the full and bold and objective setting forth of the dignity of His Person, and the merits of His sacrifice, and the sufficiency of His righteousness, and the power of His intercession for a lost race—the bone and sinew, the flesh and blood, the very life-marrow of our spiritual and intellectual consciousness, uttered as in the place of Christ, and with the breath of His Spirit, to those whom, whether for good or evil, for sorrow or gladness, it must either persuade or harden, win or lose, for ever.

There is, first, organization. Some years ago I visited Greece, and from the summit of Pentelicus I looked down

over the tumulus of Marathon and the gleaming waters of the Ægean, upon the hills and valleys of the immortal land. My impression when I came away was of a somewhat commonplace character. What that interesting country seemed to need, far more than extended territory, costly armaments, or even a footstool in a European congress, was *roads*. Until she has suitable means of communication between her towns, and her forests, and her mines, and her quarries, and her seaports, she will not be important; for she cannot be prosperous. What roads are to the commerce of a country, organization is to the methods of a Church. If it does not make work, it often suggests it, and always facilitates it. And although it is not our loftiest duty, for in a sense it can never be spiritual, yet we know from the Gospels that the apostles mended their nets as well as used them; and I suppose Noah was almost as much a preacher of righteousness when he was building the ark, as when he was entreating his neighbours to enter it. It is not for us to choose the duties we prefer, to the neglect of those we dislike. When we are clear that they *are* duties for us, we must grip them, and do them as well as we can. Nor is it for us to say that a duty is so small that we may evade it because of its smallness. What is small? what is great? A linch-pin is not the biggest part of a wheel, but if neglected it can take a terrible revenge.¹ Where the work of a parish is judiciously mapped out, conveniently subdivided, punctually done, and steadily maintained, there must be a will behind

¹ As Calvin observes in his *Institutes*, "Hinc et eximia consolatio nascetur, quod nullum erit tam sordidum ac vile opus quod (modo tuæ vocationi pareas), non coram Deo resplendeat, et pretiosissimum habeatur."—Lib. iii., cap. x, 6.

it all, which can only be kept from flagging by a spirit of energetic and exact obedience; and a minister of Jesus Christ who is punctual in answering letters, exact in keeping engagements, prudent in choosing instruments, fertile in contriving resources, cheerful in enduring disappointment, patient in expecting success, and courageous in risking failure, though he may sometimes, by those who do not care to imitate him, jauntily be called a server of tables, yet to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Depend upon it that good habits of business cannot yet be safely dispensed with by those who have to discharge the voluminous and complex duties of an English clergyman. Bishop Baring, when at All Souls', was a striking instance of the possibility of combining close attention to details and a great faculty of administration with solid teaching and a life that will not soon be forgotten.

Then there is the pastoral function, which, to sustain continuously, to master thoroughly, to discharge spiritually, and to accept cheerfully, some will honestly confess, though not so much with the poor as with the rich, to be one of the hardest tasks of their lives; for there is no self-indulgence involved in it, though abundance of self-sacrifice. As Vinet observes, a man is only sure of his vocation for the ministry when he feels moved and pressed to exercise the cure of souls. It needs the patient skill of the solitary angler, as well as the fling and splash of the net into the deep waters for the glittering spoils leaping into the wet meshes, as the eager hands pull it to the shore. Do you remember also what Bengel says about it?—"Experience teaches us that many souls can usefully be reached by preaching; but with most men the work of grace only operates by an individual treatment; so that we must

make great use of private visits. The pastor often derives more results from his visits than from his public preaching." And he adds, in a passage of great beauty, which I must not further quote, "Dear pastors, fill your hearts with love for Christ." I said just now it is hard,—hard at least to do well. Personal shyness; lack of the very rare faculty of originating conversation with those with whom we do not feel to have many ideas in common; indolence, whether mental or bodily, that bane of us all; a certain innate difficulty of speaking anything on the great verities of religion (not always the result of cowardice, sometimes of a holy delicacy and tender reserve), with the painful consciousness of continual failure, and the sadness of humbling failure *here*;—all these, whether singly or collectively, make a plan of systematic visitation very hard for some of us. The only force I know of to impel us to it is the force of a quick and restless conscience; the only motive that will sustain us in it is the thought of the unspeakable preciousness of the souls for which Jesus died. These will overcome, but nothing else will. These will thaw and stir, move and soften; give courage to the timid, and patience to the hasty; tears to the heart, and wings to the feet. The gospel brought to the ear, looked into the eyes, uttered from the heart, and conveyed by the lips of one who is literally a messenger of Jesus Christ, and who goes from house to house to those who do not care, or are not able, to come to him to hear it, has a force and a blessing which some day we shall be amazed to discover, when, in the hour of our Lord's return, the souls that once we thought so hard, and flippant, and morose, and immovable, when we used to visit them in their hours of occupation or in their moments of ease,

shall be found to have nursed in fruitful hearts the seeds of truth we timidly, perhaps coldly, cast upon the waters; and we who sowed in tears shall reap in joy.

Another part of our ministry is the conducting of public worship, and the ministering of the sacraments. What holy reverence, what calm gladness, what scrupulous carefulness, what grave collectedness, should our own demeanour as we pray, the very sound of our voice as we speak, convey and impress on our flock around us! When we read Holy Scripture, to utter each sacred word as in the name and for the glory of Jesus; when we administer the sacraments, whether of initiation into the Church, or edification in it, to minister as men possessed with the lofty but awful blessedness of being stewards and servants of God; with a tender joyfulness and an adoring gratitude at being permitted to be His instruments. Two thoughts may well fill us with a sense of loss and also of surprise: How strong we might become, if our prayers, through being really uttered, always reached God! how they would reach Him, and draw from His wells of salvation, if we did but love! The wandering of our prayers, and the coldness of them, their feebleness, and so their impotency, may well shame us into an effort to try to make them better, and thereby help us to the secret that better to pray is more to love. From my very heart, to you, my brethren in Christ, I speak this word: learn, learn to worship, through better trying to adore. As we confess, let us think of the blood shed for us. As we ask, let us plead the perpetual intercession of the Priest upon His throne. As we praise, let us remember that when Jesus praised, it was because the gospel had been made potent to the poor and simple. As we intercede, let us gather into our heart the great tale of sorrow and trial and perplexity and solitariness

of the dear souls kneeling all around us ; and, with something of the love of the Good Shepherd who could die to save them, let us lay them in prayer on His heart. Without this, so-called simplicity is baldness ; and with this, a very barn becomes a temple of God. If it has ever been possible to say of evangelical worship that it is cold and repelling, henceforth let it be impossible. Without comparing invidiously or ungracefully plain services with musical, this we shall all agree about, that heartiness and devoutness are the true essentials of acceptable worship of any kind. Yet the steady and regular responses of a devout congregation have a melody about them which is at least a spiritual harmony. The burst of sacred song from hearts which know personally the blessedness of salvation has an inimitable grandeur of its own.

Then there is the preaching ; and here, if anywhere, we may say with emphasis and certainty, the preacher is as the man. Here, too, some of us are disposed to confess that the longer we preach the harder we find it to reach our own standard ; though we may for our consolation remember the despair of the artist who, in the supreme work of his genius, becoming conscious that he had at last satisfied himself, was chilled by the thought that he could no longer improve. Let me quote here the words of St. Cyran, the famous Port Royalist, in a letter to a friend : “ Preaching is not less a terrible and tremendous mystery than that of the Eucharist. To me it seems that preaching is much more terrible ; for it is by means of it that we beget and raise souls to God ; while we only nourish them by the Eucharist, or, to speak more exactly, heal them. For a man to make himself worthy of this function, he must labour to put great restraints on himself, and after having brought his heart

to desire nothing from this world, to reduce his tongue to perfect silence, which is, as I understand it, the last perfection a man acquires striving for goodness to make him worthy to deliver the Word of God in public, where one ought more to fear about offending Him than anywhere." The solid thought behind the lucid order; the culture that gleams out of the words, and the style, that seems so facile, just from the pains taken with it, but which wanted hours, perhaps days, for its winged smoothness; the subtle humour; the pathetic action, whether of hand, voice, or eye; most of all, the quiet dignity of one who speaks for Christ; the holy tenderness of one who knows what hangs on the message being accepted or being despised; and that He who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and who yearns to save us, will not force even a little child to love Him against its will; the glow of righteous anger at sin and meanness and selfishness, which can rebuke, yet not so as to exasperate into bitterness, which can wound, yet with the faithful wounds of a friend, who wounds only that he may heal; most of all, the quiet, unconscious, but felt power—the power of an indomitable and lofty faith that breathes out of the words, because the grace of God goes with them, and because he who speaks them came straight from God before he began to speak them, goes straight back to God that He may bless them when they are done. All this is easy to describe, delightful to observe, admirable to recommend, possible to attain, as Brainerd and Whitefield attained them in days of old: not impossible for us, on the one condition that we walk closely and humbly with God.

To conclude: There is a noble controversy for us, which should fire us with its lofty ideal; there is also a perilous controversy, which a wise man, who knows him-

self, and loves his brethren, will be in no great hurry to undertake.

To do most for Christ by purity of doctrine, by steadiness of effort, by abundance of prayer, by meekness of charity, should be our only controversy, in all generous and manly love ; then not only shall the Church gain, and those who would make mischief between us be sorely discomfited, but there will be no compromise of faithfulness to tarnish our honour, and no loss of consistency to give hollowness to our words.

But the perpetual inspiration for life and for motive, for patience and for sacrifice, is conscious union with Christ. Christ at this moment is different to each one of us. He differs in our idea of His perfection, in our attainment of His image, in our fruition of His presence, in our capacity for His love. And as Christ differs for us, His kingdom will differ by us. Oh, to get nearer to His face, and so better see His glory, and be in deeper sympathy with the purpose of His cross ! This at least is what He Himself tells us is the one secret of glorifying Him in the world, and of discovering His truth for ourselves. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." And this sustained holy fellowship will mean two things : peace for our own hearts, and intercession for our people. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man. Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." As the greatest of American Episcopal preachers puts it, "God is even more jealous of His love than of His honour. Let us run into the shelter of that divine life,

just creep across the threshold—there no trouble can pursue ; and if we are really Christ's, then back into the very bosom of His Father—He will carry us. We too shall look out and be as calm and independent as He is. The needs of men shall touch us just as keenly as they touch Him ; but the sneers and strifes of men shall pass us by, as they pass Him by, and leave no mark on His unruffled life.”¹ It will also help us to intercession ; and our ministry with our people will ever depend on our prayers for them. Hear Massillon : “ Accompany your anxieties with your prayers ; speak still more often to God about the disorders among your people, than to themselves ; deplore more often to Him the obstacles which your own unfaithfulness offers to their conversion, than their own obstinacy can produce ; charge yourselves alone, before His feet, with the scanty fruit of your ministry ; as a tender father, excuse in His presence the faults of your children, and accuse only yourselves.”²

Finally, look on, seriously, steadfastly, solemnly, to the end of all. As I, for one, look back over a ministry of many and busy years, three reflections fill my spirit with wonder and with sadness : the awfulness of the responsibility which I have so feebly appreciated ; the grandeur of the duty which I have so coldly undertaken ; the joy of the ministry which I so scantily taste. My brethren, my brethren, the cross of Christ is at once the measure of Divine love and human necessity, and the story of that cross we are to preach, and to live for the salvation of the world. Let us not grow accustomed to its awfulness, nor wearied by its onerousness, nor indifferent to its

¹ “ Sermons,” by Rev. Phillips Brooks, pp. 95, 97.

² “ Discours sur le Zèle des Pasteurs.”

reward. Let us preach our sermons first to ourselves. Let us humbly, eagerly, reverently, faithfully, use the means of grace for our own spirit, if we would pass them on to our flocks, which we are to feed for God. Let us remember the failing strength, the waning opportunities, the regrets on the death-bed, the inevitable summons to the judgment-seat of Christ. You remember, perhaps, the dying regrets of Adolphe Monod, a saint of God, if ever there was one in our modern time. He regretted that he had not learnt to better purpose that the secret of a holy, active, and peaceable life is in entire self-surrender to God both of will and plan. He regretted his scanty, desultory, and broken study of the Word of God. He regretted that he had wasted time through not being sufficiently methodical and painstaking in the use of it. He regretted his prayers. He regretted the absorbing influence of trifles. And it was too late; life was gone, and regrets could not bring back the irrecoverable past, nor could experience be wisdom for yesterday.

As I began I end, "Ministerial efficiency is dependent on the life and character of the minister." In St. Paul's way of putting it, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is souls we have to win, and we shall best win them, not so much by ingenious dialectics, or vivid scene-painting, or massive erudition, or emotional appeals; but chiefly by the awful earnestness of men who are fired with zeal for God, and with serious sympathy for their brethren, whose goodness is the breath of their speech, and their consistency its rhetoric. We have presently to meet our flocks in eternity; and these characters of ours, which are the personal forces of our ministry, we are our-

selves forming day by day, to be our spiritual, indestructible inheritance in the everlasting future. If the fiery trial which is to try us is to spare our *work*, it can only be by our now welcoming the candle of the Lord to search *us*, and prove *it*; and the only guarantee for our personal acceptance and our public coronation is a "life hid with Christ in God."

THE DIVINE SILENCES.

“Your thoughts are making you.”

THE DIVINE SILENCES.

Preached in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, March 2, 1890.

“ But He answered her not a word.”—MATT. xv. 23.

CHRIST, we see, had His limitations, His moods of sternness, and His defeats. His limitations, imposed on Him by His Father, recognized and accepted by Him in unquestioning dutifulness, and given as the reason for declining to exercise His ministry across the Jewish boundaries, are instructive in two ways. They indicate in an impressive and striking fashion the mighty and indisputable fact of the Divine Sovereignty, which crosses, and perplexes, and, it may be, disappoints us at every turn of life ; which we can neither explain, nor deny, nor evade, nor resist ; and which, if it may well fill some of us with unspeakable thankfulness for the blessings which it has bestowed on us, to others is the unfathomable problem of a clouded righteousness. “ I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It was enough for Him to know that, and He accepted it. His Father would presently justify Himself before the world. Of course the limitation of His ministry to the Jews meant the loss of it to the Gentiles ; but “ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? ”

For us too, though in a sense and degree far different, to know our limitations, and to accept them, and to obey them, is the supreme secret of dignity and usefulness. Many a spoiled life can be traced to an ambitious effort to transgress this Divine order. It is not so often the man with five talents who cares or tries to make other five talents out of them, as the man with but two talents, who knowing that they are only two, and glad that they are as many as two, manfully and cheerfully sets himself to make them four.

He had His moods of sternness. Let us confess that in this pathetic history there is at first sight something which distresses us almost to pain. If we were to be silent to each other as the Lord was silent to this poor troubled mother, and then speak with the abruptness wherewith He spoke to her, a great deal of self-control might be needed to prevent its becoming intolerable, and only an immense kindness afterwards could obliterate it from the mind.

But the Lord knew His purpose and her tenacity. A hasty and superficial pity might have marred a lifelong blessing. In the words of the prophet, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." In truth, His love was far too strong, and deep, and holy to have anything of softness or weakness about it. What we call kindness, in our daily relations with each other, becomes quite a different thing when we consider it as manifested by Christ. His kindness braced that it might heal, waited that it might double itself, was absolutely indifferent to hasty misconstruction of its purpose, and in the end was well worth waiting for. His defeat was the victory,

which the fulness of His own grace enabled her to win from His love. Faith which can remove mountains can also overcome God. It is, indeed, the grace of God in man concurring with the eternal purpose in God. Christ wondered at it, and then suffered her to claim from Him all that she desired. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." So "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

"He answered her not a word." On the Divine Silences I would speak now. History is full of them. The Bible is full of them. Most of us here know them to our cost; also, I doubt not, for our consolation. To observe the varieties of them, to discover the meaning of them, to recognize the wisdom of them, and to secure the blessing of them, is to go a very long way in fathoming the counsels of God, and to reconcile us to the hardness of our duty.

There are questions which God refuses to answer, and there are questions which He consents to answer, and for these questions much light is to be gained from this conduct of Christ.¹

I. The questions, at least some of them, which Christ did not answer then, and will not answer now, are *dishonest*, or *presumptuous*, or *speculative*, or *controversial*.

He will not answer *dishonest* questions, by which I mean questions put in an insincere spirit, or with the judgment and intention already matured, or with no thought of obedience, or with motives which will not bear the Divine scrutiny, or in an almost insolent flippancy—

¹ Prebendary Eyton has an instructive sermon, to which I owe much, "The True Life," p. 133.

“Light half-believers of our casual creeds
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled ;
For whom each year, we see,
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new,
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day.”
(Matthew Arnold.)

When the Pharisees demanded a sign He refused it. Was He not Himself all the Sign that they could require? When the high priest said unto Him, “Answerest Thou nothing?” He held His peace. When Pilate said, “Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?” “He answered him to never a word.” “When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, and he questioned with Him in many words ; but He answered him nothing.” It was partly in mercy, for it might have been only to increase their condemnation ; partly in judgment, for a seared heart must be treated as it deserves ; partly also in dignity. Could the Son of God consent to amuse the vacant hours of a vicious and cruel king?

Yes, and there are many even now who go to Christ with their questions, not knowing what it is they want, nor at all clear that He has it to give them ; either too shallow to be really in earnest or too worldly to consent to part with a single bauble for the love of God. So there is no voice ; all is darkness and silence. He answers them not a word ; and it must be admitted that they do not much care.

There are *presumptuous* questions, questions which ought not to be asked, for they can never be answered ; questions which skirt the mysterious borderland between sense and

spirit, between the visible and invisible worlds; questions on which neither of the three great revelations vouchsafed to man in nature, and conscience, and Scripture cast one gleam of light; questions for which Science, properly so-called, has nothing but an ineffable disdain, and Religion a solemn indignation.

The spirit-world with its invisible multitudes, its unfathomed capacities, its unknowable occupations, has been deliberately shut off from us by a curtain of darkness. To strive to peep into that world, to filch its secrets, and to converse with its inhabitants, and to discover what they think, and feel, and do, by any mechanical jugglery, such as that which seems to fascinate many, whose faith is not strong enough to confess a living God, but whose superstition is base enough to attempt communion with the dead, is, to my mind at least, a far more shocking phenomenon than the corrupt animalism of the Mormons; comes nearer (if there is anything serious in it) to devil-worship than anything we have lately seen in Western Christendom.

To suppose, even for a moment, that He who has the keys of Death and Hades would permit spirits in discipline to break their awful captivity just to gratify the inquisitive caprice of a knot of triflers, is a grave insult to His Divine Majesty. Is He more likely to spare from Paradise, for the same unworthy reason, the saints who see His Face and hear His Word?

Of the invisible forces of the evil spirits, their number, their varieties, their activities, their permitted liberty, we know hardly anything; though, indeed, what we do know is hardly matter for a buffoon's jesting. But, if we are in any sense Christians, we may be well assured that they too have limits which they cannot transgress, and boundaries

which they may not pass over. Indeed, one hardly knows whether to smile with contempt on what, if it be only a folly, is a very horrible folly ; or to denounce with indignation what, if it is a sin at all, is a very ghastly sin. Assuredly it is not a pastime to be safely played at. No reverent or believing heart should risk, even for what may euphemistically be called a phantasy or experiment of science, a grave dishonour to the kingdom and supremacy of Christ. Christ will not answer a word to such audacious attempts to force the barriers He has inflexibly imposed upon us. If there ever does seem to be an answer—and I fear to provoke a smile by hinting the possibility of it—it must be either the impudent fraud of a designing charlatanism, or the voice of one whose works the Son of God took flesh to destroy.

There are *speculative* questions which Christ will not answer. When the disciples asked Him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” He replied, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” The most profound, and reasonable, and melancholy, and yet pressing of all questions is no doubt this—how evil came into the world ; and the most honest, even if it be helpless and disappointing, answer is simply this—We cannot tell, and we are not meant to know. In the teaching of our Lord, a hint about it occasionally falls from Him, as in the parable of the tares, where the owner of the field is made to say, “An enemy hath done this.” When, again, He healed an afflicted woman in the synagogue, He said of her that Satan had bound her for eighteen years ; and it should be observed that no figure is used here, no symbolism, simply the distinct and emphatic assertion of a tremendous fact, which He who had

come to redeem the world might reasonably be expected both to understand and declare. The Bible does not profess to explain the mystery, but it does tell us that evil is to be overcome with good, and that Christ has come into the world to do battle with it, and that we are to help Him in the battle, and that at last all shall be reconciled, and the mystery cleared, and death conquered, and God and good be all in all.

Once more, there are *controversial* questions which He will not answer; for were they answered, we might lose a very wholesome discipline for diffidence and charity. When the disciples asked the Lord, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He distinctly declined to give them an answer. There are other matters, too, of commanding interest, and of real importance, about which we are sometimes tempted to think, had we been told but a little more, how much burning controversy, and perilous division, and weakening of strength in the face of the enemy might have been spared to the Church of God. If, for instance, but one clear direction had been given us about the baptism of infants, there would have been no opportunity, or, as some would put it, no justification for a separate body of Christians, to whom the ordinance that the rest of us so dearly love seems an unreal and even superstitious thing. If in the not unimportant matter of Church government we had been in a position to gather, not only from logical inference, or from historical continuity, the rule of order most pleasing to God and most edifying for man, but from a distinct command of Christ, the three last centuries of Christian history might have been spared many a rent and tear in the robe of outward unity; also many a blow and wound aimed by hot and

even venomous tongues by brother against brother, and even by saint against saint.

The Head of the Church has thought and ordered otherwise. He sees further than we see. He looks deeper than we look. It is not for us to scan His designs ; it is for us to accept His discipline. If we go to His Word to justify ourselves in arraigning and condemning the brethren who differ from us, there is no reply. When we consent to learn from His silence to decide modestly, to tolerate generously, to judge kindly, to love sincerely, a Voice comes to us, and grace goes with it : "Peace be unto you."

II. Among the questions He consents to answer are these, and they are very practical (though we do not always quite appreciate them) : questions about *pain*, and about *duty*, and about *truth*, and about *failure*.

There was a man born blind from his birth, and the disciples, regarding him with a wondering pity, asked the Lord, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They felt, as so many of us feel even now, that affliction of a marked kind must have the nature of punishment about it, and that we suffer because we have sinned. The Lord's answer is most instructive. "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents" (in the sense they put on it of having deserved such an affliction), "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." *Pain*, we see, is an opportunity from God to man for glorifying Him, by patience, and unselfishness, and cheerfulness, and power, all disciplined thereby.

We have observed this constantly in others, and some day, it may be, others are meant to see it in us. As man's life draws towards its sunset, a chill mist often falls on what we call our happiness, through failing health, and

vanishing duties, and friends departing, and the dull opaque years with no pleasure in them. Then is the time to show that we can trust, and endure, and hope, and praise; that we can love God, not only for what He has, but for what He is; that we feel Him to be kind, not only when He gives, but when He takes away. If the final discipline of the closing years is the school-time for Paradise, it may also be a working of the works of God in us, by the lessons it teaches to others who possibly could learn them in no other way. They who stand by and wait on us should be helped to discover, as no books or sermons could teach them, that the life hid with Christ in God, even when all active service is a thing of the past, has its lessons of quiet heroism and its revelation of the Unchanging Pity. There may be much uselessness in the fussy hurrying of a restless if well-meaning philanthropy; nothing so continually or irresistibly glorifies God, and manifests His Presence, as the quiet and even joyful suffering of His helpless saints.

He will answer questions about *duty*, though the answer may startle us, and at first seem more than we can bear, and at last drop from our palsied hands. When the rich young man came to Christ, with his perfectly honest question, what he was to do to "inherit eternal life," Christ instantly answered him, though the answer fell as the blow of an iron flail on a young sapling, and crushed his eager hope. The Lord could not water down duty to please any one, though He would gladly have imparted all needful strength for doing it, had it been desired. Perhaps it is never really so hard to discover duty as to resolve on doing it, whatever it may be found to be. To all of us, as life goes on, there will occasionally be real and grave per-

plexity as to where our duty lies between two rival claims on us. But the will is ever the straightest road to the judgment, and "the meek will He teach His way." Christ Himself had moments when impending duty seemed almost intolerable, and He can feel for us. To know our duty is, of course, quite a distinct thing from consenting to it; but it is much even to wish to know it. Christ pledges Himself to show it to us, and to help us in getting it done. He will answer us about *truth* in a degree which we must appreciate, and by methods which we must accept, and on conditions which we must observe. His promise to us is not to impart truth instantly, or entirely, or infallibly, but by His Spirit to show us the way into all truth, and then to leave us there to find it for ourselves as individual capacity, and gifts, and the leisure at our disposal, and mental sincerity, and other concurring helps and circumstances may make it possible. The laws of thought cannot be repealed for any school of learners or for any department of truth. They are unchanging and universal. Nor will He even help us to truth if we choose to despise human aids, or refuse to learn from our brethren, or think study superfluous and books a fatigue. Also there are moral conditions to intellectual progress. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Humility which confesses ignorance, and docility which welcomes light, and industry which labours, and sagacity which compares—all have their great reward. In Mr. Illingworth's striking language, "Christianity distinctly declines to be proved first and practised afterwards. Its practice and its proof go hand in hand, and its real evidence is its power."¹

¹ "Lux Mundi," p. 211.

Truth is inexhaustible, and he who has gained most will be first to confess how little he has gained. But the doctrine which teaches of God has a special condition attached to it, which no other doctrine can claim in a like way; and a benediction going with it. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

He will also answer questions about our *failures*. He knew disappointment, and keenly felt it, in the days of His flesh, though His came to Him from the slowness and perversity which constantly encountered Him, and through no fault in Himself. He will mercifully enter into ours, though sin and infirmity be at the root of them, and will enable us to understand, and even surmount them in the patience of hope.

"Why could not we cast him out?" was the troubled question of the disciples, when baffled in their treatment of the demoniac child. "Because of your unbelief," was the reply. Unbelief is a weakness with many elements in it; its chief mischief being, that it palsies the hand which should grasp the Divine Omnipotence, and closes the eye of the soul which should catch its inspiration from the vision of God. Never to be disappointed is not greatly to care; always to be disappointed must mean to be very weak or very foolish; sometimes to be disappointed may even be a sort of honour.

But our duty is to take our disappointments to Christ, and our wisdom is to consult Him about them, and our safety is to do what He bids us, and our joy is to expect their final reward. For what looks to us like failure, may be but the seed waiting in the frozen earth for warmth and moisture. Disappointment is often but a deferred success. Over a world still lying in the wicked one hangs the shadow of the cross on which the Saviour died.

My friends, of this let us be perfectly sure ; that whatever may be Christ's silences to those who deserve them, He is never really silent to those who desire His salvation, and crave His grace, and bear His cross, and trust His love. It is easier for the sun to fall out of the sky than for Him to be hard, or cold, or indifferent to the humblest soul that seeks His face. For a moment He may seem to be on the top of the mountain far away in the darkness, while we are being tossed in the storm. It is night, and Jesus is not with us. But the faintest cry of distress, or alarm, or loneliness reaches Him as He offers His intercession for us. He hastens to us, though in a shape we may not always recognize, and in a way that we cannot instantly understand. Yet, whether He comes walking on the water over the midnight sea ; or hails us from the shore, wearied with thankless toil ; or at the graveside speaks to us, while the tears blind Him, it is no longer true of Him that He answers us not a word. The silence is broken. His voice whispers, "It is I ; be not afraid," and there is a great calm.

THE POWER OF COURAGE.

“The worst of the worthy people is that they are such cowards. A man groans over a wrong ; he holds his tongue, he eats his supper and he forgets all about it.”

THE POWER OF COURAGE.

Preached at the Consecration of Lyss Church, July 2, 1892.

“Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”—ZECH. viii. 13.

It cannot be hard to see how the Church of Zechariah's time needed the tonic of vigorous counsel. For there was something to fear then; and to be absolutely free from anxiety would have implied either the presence of a stolid apathy, or the lack of a righteous jealousy for God. The yet recent captivity had worked its iron into men's souls. The ruined temple, while it demanded their entire energies, rapidly exhausted them. Disunion in their midst bred a sour and paralyzing suspiciousness, and mocking enemies under the shadow of the city walls threw a chill into their hearts. Yet even then the prophet did not shrink from forbidding them to fear; and while he deprecated the mischief, indicated the remedy. That remedy, if we may so speak of it in our modern conventional language, is the very perfection of good sense. Clearly he might have said, “Your alarm is exaggerated,” which though true would have been liable to be disputed. Or he might have suggested that with a little patience it would disappear, which would have been like comforting a farmer gazing on his drenched crops with the prospect of next year's

harvest. What he does say not only inculcates a precept, but presses the way of performing it ; for while he forbids alarm, his antidote is duty. "Fear not, but let your hands be strong."

To work, my friends, is the secret of courage for us all. For while it is noble to trust, and inspiring to hope, and prudent to watch, and manful to wait, and blessed to pray, there are crises in life when the trusting, and hoping, and watching, and waiting, and praying are to be all welded and concentrated in action. When Joshua, after the defeat at Ai, fell on his face before the Captain of the Lord's host, the answer came to him—"Get thee up ; wherefore liest thou thus on thy face ? . . . Up, sanctify the people." To the apostles in Gethsemane, roused, ashamed, penitent, ready, had they had the chance to watch and pray ten nights with their Lord, the monition came with almost a stern promptness—"Rise, let us be going."

And the reason is plain. The heart brooding over weakness and danger magnifies them, and thereby makes its task heavier. Anticipated difficulties sometimes never happen ; and then we have wasted moral nerve, and perhaps wholesome emotion, in slaying lions that do not cross our path. It is not only actual power we need to make us strong, but that consciousness of it which gives it its leverage ; and whatever diminishes the leverage checks the force. Possessed with its duty, happy in it, and too much absorbed in it either to watch the fleeting clouds, or to listen to the cawing of gloomy idlers, the soul holds itself in peace ; and evil tidings, when they come, cannot move it from its steadfastness.

"Fear not, but let your hands be strong." About which words, let me first observe that the prophet did not mean

to say, and we must not pretend to think, that the Church has nothing to fear, wherever she is, whatever she does. This would be presumption indeed. "Others save with fear," writes St. Jude. There is ever much in ourselves that we ought to fear, must fear, if we be true Christians. Yet, as I shall proceed to show, there assuredly is nothing out of ourselves and independent of us that we need fear, if we will only hold fast by God. For instance—

1. We ought to fear that unnecessary and unchristian disunion which, springing not from a holy faithfulness, but from a sour and narrow egotism, is grievous to the mind of Christ, and secretly, but fatally, dismembers His Body. We ought to fear that base prudence which can whip the poor with the cords of sharp rebuke, but holds its peace at the sins of the wealthy ; and which, keeping back truth lest it offend those on whose favour our worldly advancement may perhaps be hanging, first asks, "Will this please my powerful hearers?" instead of considering if it is the message of God. Most of all, let us fear even for a moment to weigh as with an ant's wing against the scales of duty and conscience, the breath of popular favour, or the possible schemes of destructive statesmen, which, to some men's eyes, are already bringing a mighty and sudden chasm to yawn under our feet, and smiting a timid few with a panic which so justly compels the cynical, but quite reasonable inquiry, if the Church is really a divine institution, or only the paid hireling of men. Over such unworthy alarms a man's heart gets into a white heat of Christian shame ; and I name them only to dismiss them with contempt. The love of ease, the fear of man, the power of the sinful nature within us, the love of Christ growing cold, and through that coldness souls perishing for which He died,—these things

we will fear ; though indeed, if we are wise, we shall not too much dwell upon them. For just as the human body is not braced, but depressed rather, by the air of a putrid marsh, no man's soul is helped by too much contemplation of his weakness and sin.

2. But I will now tell you what we need not fear. For ours is a righteous Master ; as righteous as He is kind.

We need not fear the overwhelmingness of our labour. Of course we think not only of the work that is being done, but of that which is to be done. There are not only the people that are all round here, but the people that are coming here. Some of us never can overtake our work—hardly even get within sight of it. The rapid increase of population might well make the Church faint and tremble at the duty accumulating for her, if she did not know that all grace is hers ; might tempt her feebly to complain that the task laid on her shoulders is more than she is able to bear, if it were not even more the task of her Lord. And when we think of the thousands and tens of thousands of redeemed souls all over the diocese, practically destitute of means of grace, or at least indifferent to them—passing from childhood into youth, and from youth into manhood, and from manhood to old age, and from old age to the judgment-seat of Christ, “having no hope,” so far as we know, “and without God in the world”—we might well be daunted in even attempting to touch a burden with which it seems impossible to grapple.

But, I say, we serve a just Master, who knows what we are to whom the task is given, and what we need for doing it when it is given. We are limited, and He Himself has made us so. Limited in our bodily strength ; limited in our mental freshness ; limited in the number

of our opportunities; limited even in the power of our devotion. He knows us, and He bears with us, and He pities us (let us hope) more than we think of. Also He uses and blesses us. If some of His servants have never for the last thirty years of their lives been able with any sort of adequacy to discharge the enormous duties of an English and urban ministry, we must nevertheless cast our burden on the Lord, with all consciousness of imperfection, but in humble trust on His grace. He knows them that are His, and if, with all their faults and shortcomings, they try their best to be faithful, He will welcome and crown them at last.

3. Once more, as men, we need not fear the disaster of adverse circumstances, whether of murrain or tempest, of revolution or change. If any Church in the world ought to be delivered from fear of circumstances into a calm trust in God, it is our dear Church of England. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

And this is, I think, a lesson that we need to be reminded of now. Of course, I do not mean that she has not had storms which have furiously tossed her, as the shrieking wind sweeps down upon a lonely ship on the winter sea; or that she has not had again and again to pass through fires that have scorched her to the very bone, and put her to bitter suffering. The storm has in the end only rooted her more firmly in the earth, and out of the fire she has come pure and cleansed and strong. The Church fell on evil days, as men thought then. Yes, and on very gloomy days, when the great Rebellion swept over the land with its besom of destruction, and the Church's rulers and pastors were driven out of their

posts and homes, and her organization seemed totally submerged as with the wave of a typhoon. But time went on; and whether or no the lesson was fully learned, God restored to her her heritage, and she has kept it to this hour. Presently another trial came, with the second James. We know how he put his own representatives into the chair of Magdalen College; how this time Rome was again her foe, instead of Puritanism; how seven bishops went to the Tower for the liberty and faith of England; and came out, having for us, as well as for their own time, won their cause. That storm came, and was spent long ago. Again, just fifty years ago, about the time of the first Reform Bill, the Church was in peril again, and, to save the vessel, much of her precious cargo was hastily thrown overboard. She righted herself, and has gone on till now, wiser, and I think stronger. To-day people are beginning to be frightened again, and I say that, if they will be frightened, let them be frightened. But they shall not frighten us, when God is saying, in a voice we will listen to, "Fear not, but let your hands be strong;" and it seems to us it will be time enough to be frightened when the Church is losing hold of the love of the people, instead of, as she plainly is, ever more gaining it; when she deserves rejection for her smoothness, rather than tempting it by her courage; when she will cease to be an object of alarm and jealousy because no one any longer thinks her worth either notice or attack—though she will, no doubt, be always worth spoiling; when all that she really retains will be the gold in her purse, and a certain social precedence for her great clergy, but has lost the grace of God, the love of souls, and the esteem of men.

Fear, God forbid. For whatever may be in front of us,

the benediction of God shall compensate for the conduct of men. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." Only let us love God and our people for His sake, and make our lives show it, then we are unassailable in all that touches our true riches, and are immortal in all that affects our heavenly life. And His word to us shall be, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee: and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city."

4. Once more, let active love, that is, duty (the natural result and child of love), cast out fear.

"Let your hands be strong"—socially and personally; strong in the fearless vindication of the everlasting gospel; strong in the unwearied and incessant ministrations of kindly sympathy and love; strong in the undaunted rebuke of sin and falsehood, and social injustice and private iniquity; strong in the manful independence of the inner conscience of the heart. Men want the gospel, and expect us to give it them; and are disappointed, and wonder what we are meant for if we do not give it them. Be not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. Let your neighbours know and use you as a Christian friend. This is the true way to be strong. The Church lives and grows only through the personal sympathy and influence of her individual members. If the clergy and the laity want the Church to remain as she is, the condition, under God, of its so remaining rests with them. Let them deserve it; and the nation will still be theirs.

Oh, fear the face of no man, neither prince nor peasant, neither gentle nor simple, neither child nor patriarch, neither friend nor foe. Love truth and peace; not truth without peace, nor peace before truth, but both together.

Be true, be true, be true. And, remember, to be true, we need not be harsh, or passionate, or cold, or bitter. While in God's presence, and from God's face, we must get courage—when we have to speak even before kings and not be ashamed—yet our words, being steeped in charity, shall sink like oil into the soul, and, even against their will, men will listen, soften, and obey.

Once more, the crown, and link, and perfection, and fragrance of all is love. "Little children, love one another." "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

For love is at once a sword and a shield ; it is a weapon that none can resist, and it is a shield which nothing can penetrate. It carries with it both felicity and recompense. He who loves most has most happiness, because he who loves most has back again into his own spirit the largest share of the love that he has suggested and earned.

They say, if you want to forgive a man, pray for him—though a wise man would never tell him of it. For prayer compels you to love him, and where you love you pardon.

It is quite as true to say, that to love both makes friends and disarms enemies. If nothing brings men together like a common danger, nothing knits them like a common duty ; and what forbids the one, and inspires the other, is the parting promise on Olivet : "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

“The man who has lived most is not he who has counted most years,
but he who has most felt life.”

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, May 12, 1890.

“The seed is the Word of God.”—LUKE viii. 11.

OUR times have been happily called “the times of Christ;” and if they are not His times, whose can they be? Certainly they are the best times the world has seen since He went back to His glory; certainly, also, faith, ever bold and hopeful in proportion to its devotion and sacrifices, looks for them to be better and better, until He finally returns to “make all things new.” Does any one ask, How can they be Christ’s times, when evil is so insolent and strife so bitter, and the air hideous with discord and blasphemy; when anti-christs meet us at the corner of every street, and mockingly ask us, “Where is now thy God?” We say, that if they are the times of Christ they must be the times of antichrist,—that the kingdom of light, by its presence and potency, must stir into a malignant, if brief, activity the powers of darkness, though only to disperse them and triumph; and that they are the times of Christ, because now, more than ever, in the power of His Eternal Spirit, He lives, speaks, moves, persuades, conquers, reigns, not only among the towns and villages of our dear country, but in the continents

and islands over the sea. You Sunday-school teachers, bent on one errand, fired with one hope, serving one Lord, desiring one victory, are the best proof of it. But a handful of the 704,000 teachers from all the religious bodies in Great Britain, just out of love to the same risen Lord, and in gratitude for the one common salvation, you are constrained by the sweetness of the love which passeth knowledge, to feed the lambs He commits to your care. "The seed is the Word of God."

There are three varieties of application, in which this instructive symbol indicates the operative forces that work towards the kingdom of God. Each singly, all conjointly, and consistently inspire faith and suggest duty for the cause we desire to serve. Christ our Lord, the Word Incarnate, is Himself, in virtue of His Incarnation, the Seed immanent in humanity, lifting it into a new condition, conferring on it a fresh dignity, redeeming it unto a great future. When St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The Head of every man is Christ," he propounded a majestic truth, the entire significance of which the present age has not perhaps fully comprehended, but which is of unspeakable significance for the race.

The Church, which is His Body ; His Word, so far as it delivers His message ; His instrument, when it organizes His methods ; His representative, if it manifests His life ; His spouse, when it receives His love, is in its turn the divine seed of human society invisibly, slowly, imperfectly, with many hindrances and disappointments, yet constantly and irresistibly, shining on its darkness and preventing its corruption, and declaring its redemption, and promising its grace ; by its fabrics, and its worship, and its history, and its creeds, both in its corporate life, and according to the

working of each of its manifold parts, declaring all the counsel of God.

The individual Christian who understands that he has been saved chiefly that he may do his best to save others, and who knows that he has been bought with a price, that he may glorify Him who at such a cost has bought him, is also in a real sense the Word of God, or as St. Paul in an equivalent expression has called him, the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men: by the life he lives, and the cross he carries, and the message he utters, and the duties he loves, the fruitful seed of single souls, personally influencing them, patiently instructing them, drawing them with cords of love, winning them one by one into fellowship with Jesus; and it is on man, the seed of man—you, for example, the seed of the souls of the children, given you to teach—that I have to speak now.

Let us consider this seed of the everlasting gospel.

I. In the activities which it demands: which are chiefly three—sowing, watering, reaping. Sowing is casting the seed of divine truth into the minds and hearts of the young, leaving it there to work out the mystery of its life, as it may please God to use it, trusting about it the Fatherly love of Him the measure of whose redeeming pity is the atoning anguish of His Son. There are, of course, all varieties of skill and of diligence and of self-sacrifice in this work of sowing. In the kingdom of grace, as well as in the kingdoms of this world, nothing great can be achieved without taking trouble. God giveth the increase—here is the supreme factor in all our success. It is equally true that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.” Watering does not mean the impatient, emotional, restless efforts of an unconscious unbelief to give

God the help He neither asks nor cares for ; but the vigilant looking for the germinating of the seed, the expecting of results, here or there, to-day or to-morrow, because God's Word cannot return to Him void—not to look for results is but slightly to care for them—also that humble, fervent, pleading with Him in fervent, even passionate prayer, for those showers of blessing whereby His Spirit moves on the surface of instructed souls. “I believe in God the Holy Ghost,” must be the innermost exulting creed of every Sunday-school teacher. Prayer, and nothing but prayer, gives wings to the mind, fire to the will, tenderness to the heart. Indeed, to know what we have to do and to do it ; to know what God has to do and to leave Him to do it, is the first secret to be mastered by the servants of His kingdom, and usually the last that they come to learn. There is the reaping, sometimes of that which we have ourselves sown, more often of what others before us have sown, in part here before we die, in part hereafter when we are summoned to judgment, which is in measure given to all true workers, not always when they wish for it, but when God sees they need it, with the sense of acceptance and the joy of progress. It is varied and sometimes hard to analyze, at the best partial and liable to after-disappointments. Without something of it the jaded heart would sink under an intolerable depression. With too much of it we should soon come to think ourselves indispensable. Self-love, ever ready at a moment's notice to assert itself, might be perilously indulged at the cost of Christ's honour.

II. The conditions which it imposes are three. They are genuineness, skilfulness, and faith. The seed must be genuine : *wheat*, not bastard wheat ; the wheat that makes bread and sustains life—the seed of the Word of God. Not

all seed sown in Sunday schools, just as not all seed scattered from Christian pulpits, is unadulterated truth of God. While there must always be the human element in the teaching of the inspired Word, it must not be all the human element, which it is too often found to be, whereby much of the teaching given in our Sunday schools is, for all higher and divine purposes, not bread, but sawdust. If God is not honoured and recognized in the exact, reverent, lucid, and penetrating explanation of His Holy Word, the children, though interested by attractive story-telling, will not be won by the presentation of divine truth. They may listen to their teacher, which is good as far as it goes; but they will not be brought to Christ. It is to His Word, and His Word only, that the promise is given, that it shall accomplish the thing whereto He sent it. Other things may please, but this alone converts. In its fullest and deepest, in no emotional and sensational meaning, we long to win these children to their Saviour. We must never forget that it is the engrafted Word which is able to save our souls, and this engrafted Word they must receive at your hands.

Another condition is skilfulness; and skilfulness comes through self-culture and experience. Dr. Johnson once said, "Genius is nothing more than knowing the use of tools;" but there must be tools for it to use. A trained mind, a ready and retentive memory, insight into character, and an immense love, are vital to a considerable success. My brothers and sisters, in this blessed enterprise for Christ, bear with me, while I say to you, what I am persuaded your inmost conscience will secretly ratify, that you have no right to accept the trust, or share the responsibility of this great duty, unless you are willing, honestly willing, according to

your several opportunities—which in some cases are ample and admirable—to qualify yourselves for your work. It is not easy work, though it is very honourable ; and it is not the only way of working to which Christ summons His elect. There are so many things you need, not always seen or appreciated as they deserve to be. You will never get them all ; no one has them all. Many you may hope to get, though not instantly. Some you must get, or not only will the work be much better without you—who in such a case, though without knowing it, will be only usurping the place of others who might do it better—but you yourselves would be better without it, since, if badly or too imperfectly done, it may some day be your grievous shame. There must be a personal, loving, exact study of the Bible, for your own soul's sake, if you would have anything worth knowing to pass on to others. There must be some capacity, however little to begin with, not only for acquiring, but also for imparting knowledge. As a rule, I suspect, though practice unspeakably improves it, the gift of teaching is mostly born with us. There must be a knowledge of character, and a faculty of discrimination, and a vivid appreciation of the separateness as well as of the beautiful-ness of each single soul. For it is not so much a net you have to cast over your class, it is rather with rod and line that you must angle for each one of them ; and it is much easier to stand on the bank of the stream, and to drop your bait into the water, than to bring the fish to land. There must also be an immense love to cover manifold deficiencies, to compensate for even grave mistakes, and make the dullest, ugliest, stubbornest child beautiful in your eyes for the sake of the Lord who bought it ; and to make Christ Himself dear and beloved to you, for the

great privilege wherewith He has honoured you in trusting you with those children to nurse for Him. From your knees, where His presence has solemnized and refreshed you, you will go to your class, where His grace will instruct and sustain you; and from your class you will go back to your knees, there tenderly to plead for them by name, that He will accept from you and bless to them the Word you have tried to sow in their hearts. Such intercession will fill you with quiet and blessed happiness. It will make you feel that they are as safe with Him as love can wish them to be; and that you are as much accepted by Him as mercy and righteousness mingling together can make you to be. When the full assurance of a simple and unhesitating faith has encouraged you (as with the steady, unbroken swing of the husbandman's arm) to sow before you, and around you, as the path of His providence directs, you will not too much observe the hard and beaten impenetrableness of one spirit, or the facile mobility of another, or the chilly mundane tendencies of another. You will teach all, for all are given you to teach; hope for all, since all belong to God. If doubts arise, you will not be much disturbed by them; if fears ruffle you, you will not be paralyzed by them. The kingdom of nature has its magnificent wastefulness, and its myriad failures. In the kingdom of grace, behind human effort, is sovereign righteousness. Nevertheless, "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

III. But there are risks which the seed encounters; risks which you must bravely face and steadily reckon with; risks which you must not presume to despise in a shallow buoyancy, nor to exaggerate in a still more unworthy despair. First, there is the incessant malevolent

presence and activity of that evil spirit, whose assaults our Lord personally encountered, whose designs He solemnly unfathomed, whose snares He so distinctly exposed. "Those by the wayside are they that hear. Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." My friends, the question of questions—again and again coming up in manifold forms—is this: Did Christ know, or did He not know, what He thus spoke about? If He did not know, and so warned us against an imaginary danger, told us of a spiritual enemy who has no existence but in the superstitious dreams of an exploded Rabbinism, we are welcome to such comfort as is to be had in the consciousness of an enlightenment to which the Bible is a stranger—with this result: that if in such a matter as this Jesus was a Teacher who could not teach, He may also be a Saviour who cannot save. If we cannot trust Him for doctrine, can we go to Him for life? If He did know, and told us what He knew for our correction and instruction in righteousness, let us listen to Him and heed His words, and humbly watch against the snares of the devil.¹ The special peril against which our Lord warns us here is, I suppose, chiefly incidental to careless and shallow souls. The way in which the foe works is by the weakening, chilling, dissipating of good impressions before they have had time to take form and substance in the soul, by silly words or frivolous diversion, or even actual sin. You who are in charge of these children, be not ignorant of his devices. Make rules, and see to the keeping of them, to anticipate and prevent such mischiefs. Have your eyes and ears open, and protect your young disciples from themselves.

¹ "The True Life," p. 42.

Rely on it, there is no work which the great enemy of souls hates more than this one of teaching the young the gospel of Christ. There is nothing he dreads more than that in the freshness and innocence of childhood they should come to love Him.

Another peril is in the nature of those whom you would win ; and on either of two sides of it, the emotional or the earthly. Of all woeful and far-reaching blunders, none is more woeful, more disastrous, more common, than the incessant stimulating of the religious feelings, which presently come to be chilled, blunted, even hardened, until the most precious and important of all our sensibilities become impervious either to holy appeals or loving persuasion, and the heart, made like cold and black scoriæ in a burnt-out volcano, no longer can grow and blossom with the truth of Christ. To stir a child's tears is an easy, and a cheap, and often a selfish triumph ; but is dearly bought at the risk of a child's soul.

There is also the peril coming from the home environment—the atmosphere in which the child breathes its daily existence, and in which unconsciously, insensibly, inevitably, it is matured for responsible life. To lift up its ideal, to counteract its temptations, to help it to live for both worlds, to penetrate and transfigure its moral nature with the fear and love of an invisible Lord—what a noble aim is this, and what a lofty duty, and what an incessant but divine struggle ! You are fellow-workers with God. You must suffer, if you are true workmen. If you love, you cannot help suffering. But in proportion as you suffer now shall you reap presently. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” The atmosphere, in school at least, which you would have the children breathe, is the atmo-

sphere you must yourselves bring with you. The life you would have them live must be made possible, actual, beautiful, by the life you are seen and felt to be living yourselves. For it is not only abstract truth that wins, it is truth permeated, illuminated, and vitalized by character; and character, Christian character, is the measure of the fulness with which Christ possesses the soul.

There is one more peril—I will only touch on it—the peril which is created by yourselves. No wise man will dispute its existence, no good man will make light of its gravity, no humble man but will instantly fear for himself. In the profound figure of the parable, as I have already hinted, and by an inevitable law of the spiritual world, every man and woman in it is both the sower who sows and the seed which is sown. The peril I touch on now is that which comes either from an imperfect sense of responsibility, or from a one-sided view of duty, or from a morbid self-distrust, or from a specious self-esteem. Either to treat these children as if they were toys to be played with, or as machines to be wound up and set going, and then left to themselves, as if they were all mind and needed nothing but facts and doctrines; or as if they were all emotion, and so did not require to be taught to know and think; worst of all, that this duty, which should be thoroughly and constantly to fertilize the very springs of the invisible life with the mind and Word of God, should be lightly and easily undertaken, not for salvation, but for pastime, and so not thought worth the pains and time for real preparation—here are risks indeed. “Take heed unto thyself and to the doctrine,” wrote St. Paul to his son in the faith; and “thyself” comes before “doctrine.” That exhortation I pass on to you, my friends, in the

name of our Master Christ. The life behind the message, the message accentuated by the life, the life hidden with Christ in God, must be the unfailing, unchanging secret of all your blessed labour.

IV. Once more, there are the wages that it claims, as our Lord said to the disciples at Sychar : " He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

Whatever may be the harvest which you will be permitted to reap now, in the sense of visible results, and garnered success, and souls laid to sleep in the Lord to be your crown when He comes back ; or souls fruitful in activities for Him, which by His grace you have helped to repent, and believe, and love, and work—of your wages you may be quite sure ; and you will all of you be receiving more than you think of, in human love, in personal blessing, in accumulated and digested truth.

The love of these children, with their bright welcome, their sunny smile, their often delicate thoughtful affection, their tender sympathy—is there, can there be a blessed recompense under the sun than this ? It is the reward God asks from us ; and it is the only one He cares for, since it implies and contains and ensures everything else. To desire love is the divine nature. To receive love is the divine reward. Moreover, when they love you, you have the best evidence that you are succeeding with them. When they have once begun really to love you, they may be more than half-way towards loving Christ. Then your own personal life, in the stirring, and deepening, and widening of it, through the sacrifices you accept and the devotions you offer, is itself an unspeakable reward. It

is a law of the spiritual world that to help others is to be helped by others; and if the highest distinction we can receive for doing one duty is immediately to be offered a second, to be made more like Christ is the surest mark of His grace. Nay, even in the simplest teaching to the youngest and most ignorant (always by the way the hardest), if only our teaching is intelligent and careful, well thought out and sincere, we may find a very precious and important discipline to our own understanding in the apprehension and assimilation of divine truth. "Unto every one which hath shall be given." To share our possessions is to double them; and truth is a possession, not to be covetously hoarded, but to be eagerly passed on.

In conclusion, let us remember—

I. *The indestructibleness of truth.* As some of you, my older friends, look back over a long tract of years in which the Sunday school has had a great place in your heart and a large share of your time, not without a certain pathos asking yourselves, "How many of the thousands of lessons which I have carefully prepared and cheerfully given will bring forth fruit when the King comes back to take account of His servants?" doubt not, but earnestly believe, that if "long sleeps the summer in the seed," the summer is in the seed, if the seed sown by you is indeed the Word of God; and even now it may be shining and ripening in many a changed heart passed far out of your reach and ken. The sailor keeping watch on the midnight sea, praying as he watches; the miner toiling for gold in some Queensland gully, and thinking of the better treasure in the heavenly country towards which, by words of yours, his feet are moving; the shepherd among the wooded valleys of New

Zealand, saying over to himself the Shepherd's Psalm taught him by you ; the settler's wife, in some rude cabin on the Pacific slope, training her children as you trained her, may, without your knowing it, have found the pearl of great price, which but for you they would never have found ; through you, also, may be helping others to find it. You are the servants of Him who cannot fail, whether in truth, fulness, or power. "Heaven and earth shall pass away ; but My Words shall not pass away."

2. Be assured of *the sufficiency of grace*. All of you who are true will from time to time have your moods of depression, your seasons of disappointment, it may be, your moments of despair. Christ Himself once said, when His hearers were forsaking Him, "Will ye also go away?" The great apostle, when he prayed thrice that the thorn in the flesh might be removed, had for his answer, and he was abundantly satisfied with it, "My grace is sufficient for Thee ; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

"The river of God is full of water," and it is full for you. Each one of you, and all of you together, will never drink it dry, even for a moment. Nay, our sin is in this, that we will not drink enough of it. Let him that is athirst come, and I will give him to drink of the water of life freely. This is the great message I would leave with you now. To feel the thirst, and to be willing to be made to feel it, is the first necessity ; then to ask and to receive, that our joy may be full.

3. My last word shall be on *the joy of harvest*. There can be no reaping without sowing, and there will be no harvest without joy ; and that joy will be so noble, so holy, so unselfish, so divine. Joy among the angels of God, joy in the heart of the crowned Jesus, joy to the Father when

He sees His Son glorified, joy to the husbandman when he gathers the sheaves into his barn.

My friends, whom I greet in the Lord, and love in the Lord, this one question I leave with you. It touches your eternity, and much hangs on it and it hangs on much. It hangs on your secret motive of duty, on your personal and supreme aim, on the measure of your sacrifices, on the quality of your diligence, on the constancy of your prayers. When the Lord, whom you serve, comes back in the end of the days to take account of His servants and to make up His jewels, what think you—in your heart of hearts—will your harvest be?

DETERIORATION.

“Character is ceaselessly marching, even when we seem to have sunk into a fixed and stagnant mood.”

DETERIORATION.

Preached at Half-way Tree Parish Church, Jamaica, March 31, 1886.

“In the ship mending their nets.”—MARK i. 19.

SUCH is the inevitable employment of diligent men. For “inevitable,” I might indeed have substituted “necessary.” For how could nets be used if there were holes in them? The careless fisherman, who will not repair the tools of his craft, may save himself the pains of handling them. “Diligent,” too; for if the hot and languid hours of noon were spent in activity instead of in repose, we may see how the best recreation of duty is in the variety of it; and that while the lazy or feeble workman quickly finds excuses for the rest which he has hardly earned, the true and typical toiler will not even think of his repose until his next work is ready.

Every miracle suggests a parable, and every gospel incident conceals a philosophy.

So, I say, let us mend our nets. First, however, let us clearly understand what our nets are, and the use we are to make of them, and the conditions essential to a use which shall be at once fruitful and permanent. Also that, good as they may be, the more we use them, the more we shall see them to need mending; and that what Dean Church

has so beautifully called "the inward discipline of the soul," is absolutely essential to, must ever be the hidden concomitant of, its moral and spiritual activities.

1. What are our nets? This, I think. The separate, distinct personality of each human being, in the joint totality of body, soul, and spirit. It implies, also, that subtle, undefinable, yet most potent atmosphere, which is continually being generated by the invisible forces of its existence under the circumstances which surround it, and which we recognize under the word "character."

We are our nets. Man, and especially a Christian man, is himself pre-eminently the organ or instrument of all his activities in, or influences on, the world; other tools that he may use are subservient to this supreme one, and depend in their potency on the will and motive and power that handle them. The man is his work, and his personality is his primary instrument in it; and it never can be better or higher than what he himself is.

This being so, how important it becomes that each of us should recognize what he is sent into the world for, and what this fishing with his net must mean! "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." Each of us has come here to work out his own salvation, and to help his neighbour to work out his. We are to be salt and light. We who are baptized into Christ's body, are to recognize our fellowship with its members; baptized into His death, we must crucify the flesh; into His resurrection, we must walk in newness of life.

There can be no recognition of our duty to our neighbour unless there is first an apprehension of our relation to God. When we have truly repented of sin, and taken it to the precious blood that it may be washed away; when we

have come to know and believe the love that God hath to us, and, beholding Him at once our revealed and reconciled Father in Christ, walk with Him in conscious and filial fellowship; when we recognize that, being no longer our own, but being bought with a price, we are to glorify Him in our body and in our spirit, which are His; when we discover that personal goodness is to be the one aim of the Christian, and that the secret of this goodness is to come at once from human effort and supernatural grace; also when we appreciate the wisdom and blessedness of using special helps, and holy seasons, and quiet discipline, and cheerful sacrifice, if we would grow much like our Lord, and live in the sunshine of His face;—then the key to the secret of understanding Jesus Christ will be in our hand: we shall follow on to know the Lord.

II. What are we to understand by our nets needing to be mended?

1. The body comes, through mere force of habit, and the daily necessity of our obeying its imperious claims, to exercise a kind of tyranny over us; and to get more of its own way than it ought. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” The body needs its periods of mending. This is one of them. It may also, of course, mean those recuperative and invigorating processes whereby we supply the continual waste of vital force, healing sickness, or contriving rest.

2. The understanding also has its similar necessities of restoration and repair, and not least in that dominion of truth for which a Christian teacher feels special responsibility—revealed truth. The mind is apt to let go, in lapse of years, truths it once loved and lived by; or it becomes

obscured in matters where light means life, certainly power ; or it finds in front of it a great undiscovered land of profound verities, which through carelessness or indolence it has never yet approached to learn and to cherish and to use.

3. Then the moral nature needs caring for and looking into as well. Self grows on us with a fatal and rapid stealthiness. Temper becomes sharp, or arrogant, or feebly peevish. Faults of indolence and personal indulgence will soon grow in soil congenial to them. To abide in love is to abide in God, and to cultivate love is to follow God ; but to love as God loves, or as we wish others to love us, will not come by sighing after it. It is the work of God co-operating with the effort of man.

Once more, there is our spiritual life—that upper region of our conscious moral existence, in which we recognize God, feel after Him, commune with Him, listen to His voice, try to be conformed to His image, and rejoice in the shining of His face.

But how much our nets need mending here ! High and glowing resolves cool down. Faults which we used to struggle against we are tempted to treat as inevitable. Prayer becomes dull, short, distracted, wanting in detail, not looked forward to, not cherished in the heart when it is done. We have less personal sympathy with Christ's redeeming work in the world, less real interest in those who are foremost in the doing of it ; the horizon of hope is lowered when joy goes out of our religion ; and peace soon follows it. Our silver becomes dross, our wine is mixed with water.

III. Yes, the nets need mending ; but how is the mending to be done ?

First, there should be an honest, thorough, courageous

searching of the heart as in the presence of God, and with His help, that we may know where our shortcomings lie, and confess them, and then strive to remedy and repair them.

Self-knowledge is often keenly painful, and it does not grow easier as we grow older; and we are all too apt to wrap ourselves in the thick mantle of self-love, through which the searching air of the world's criticism fails to make its way. But pain is better than death, and to be past feeling means paralysis.

Then it is real loss and grave peril to the soul that we should become cloudy and confused about the doctrines of grace. For ideas are the true motors of all that is highest within us, and the doctrines of the gospel are the thoughts of God. What baptism means for us; what Holy Communion gives to faithful souls drawing near to receive their Lord; the exact place and function of faith in the soul's apprehension of Christ and eternal life; how Christ's death expiates sin, and satisfies the claims of the divine righteousness;—these are matters which touch our life and our motives, our aims and our conduct; and it does matter what we think we are really holding of them, unless the creeds themselves are but fragments of exploded speculation, and some of St. Paul's profoundest Epistles might as well never have been penned.

In our moral life and character, while generally aiming at the raising of the whole level of its consistent goodness, we should take special note of our besetting faults. Each knows his own; if he needs to be told them, friends are at his side who can do it. The best thing is to ask God to do it. He is so gentle, and so tender, and so true. It may be a habit of speaking ill of other people, or at least of depreciating them. Make a rule in the strength of God to try

not to speak about them at all. Why should you? It helps nobody, and it hurts many. Or is it a habit of selfishness? Then every day try once at least to surrender your will to some one else, and in a matter about which you really care. Are you lazy? Get up earlier. Does your thriftiness border on covetousness? Give more; and not only as a duty, also as a joy. Is quickness or moroseness of temper your fault? Strive against this, for it grieves God. Ask Him to pour His love into your hearts, that it may flow out on your neighbour. Cultivate sympathy. Remember that "love is going out of self."

Once more, let the flaws and fissures in our spiritual life be healed by more communion with God. Let us make special opportunities for prayer, both private and public. They will help and react on each other. Grace is as essential to goodness as effort is; work is the true complement of faith. Therefore let us come to Christ for His presence and aid in the holy ordinances of our religion; and, above all things, let us remember that it is not only our own soul that has to be stirred and deepened, but other souls near us and belonging to us. Let our life have its duties of charity as well as its offices of worship. Let us live for others, if we would have God to dwell in us.

To conclude: 1. You may have already recollected that St. Mark, in his account of this incident, is careful to relate that they were in the ship mending their nets, with their father Zebedee and the hired servants. Our ship in which we mend our nets is the Church, and it is the best place to mend them in. But to mend them together in the gathered society of the faithful stirs sympathy, suggests forbearance, and promotes intercession. We all err and slip and fail in turn. We all in turn need the kindly forbearance of our

brethren, and the merciful indulgence of our Lord. We have enough to do with our own faults, instead of looking at our brethren's. Yet we all alike need a continual forgiveness. We all need the mutual help and blessing that comes to sinful but sincere children of one heavenly family, travelling together to the many mansions of the one celestial home, from common prayer and praise. As you kneel side by side in the house of prayer, sometimes quietly think and tenderly pray for those near you—and without telling them. No help in all this world is like the help that comes by intercession. Give what you would receive.

Then mending our nets has, like everything else, a subtle snare with it. It may breed too much introspection, a morbid brooding over tiny faults, a religious egotism, even a spiritual self-complacency. We should tread upon all these possible thorns with a firm tread; we should think more of our Saviour than of our sinfulness, of His righteousness than of our own unworthiness, of what He has done for us than of what we can do for Him, of His unchanging love rather than of our own poor effort after it. We walk by faith, not by sight. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.

Then there is a sort of comfort in the thought that, as nets will wear out, so, in the nature of things, these spirits of ours need repair and restoration through the very conditions of their existence. Christ, so far from feeling these men to be but poor and unskilful at their trade, and so unsuited for the work to which He was calling them, summoned them as readily as He summoned Peter and Andrew a few yards off, casting their nets into the sea; thought no scorn of them because they were not actually at their trade. He will observe and approve and bless us for mending our nets.

He will help us to mend them ; show us where they need more mending than we had thought of ; sustain us when our patience fails, cheer us when our joy is ebbing. For oh, dear souls, what He most desires for us is that we should be partakers of His holiness ; and to be saintly means a long and steep and thorny, though even more blessed, climb up the hill, on the top of which we too shall be transfigured, just so far and so completely as we followed Him closely here.

Lastly, we mend our nets that we may use them again, perhaps in even better and nobler work than before. "Follow Me," said Jesus, "and I will make you fishers of men." Every sin conquered, every habit controlled, every virtue practised, every cross carried, means more goodness, and therefore more usefulness. Goodness will live and triumph when intellect and knowledge, wealth and genius, are utterly forgotten. There is no limit to our goodness but such as our own unbelief and indevoutness are pleased to put in the way of it. Mending our nets may be humble work, but it is useful work, and God gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

“Money may always be a beautiful thing. It is we who make it grimy.”

TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

Preached in Winchester Cathedral, Ash Wednesday, 1892.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”—MATT. vi. 20.

It has been observed of our Lord, with as much acumen as exactness, that it was His rule, in His public teaching, not so much to stir emotion as to compel reflection, and that He always aimed at reaching the conscience before winning the heart. In another way of putting it, He carefully avoided, what some of our modern revivalists apparently much desiderate, any disturbance of the equilibrium of the moral sense by artificial or premature stimulating of the feelings. It is, indeed, easy enough, and, alas ! perilous, to stir tears or to excite a superficial repentance ; but when the reaction follows—and there is sure to be a reaction—the soul, with no principles to sustain it, and no knowledge to buttress its weakness, is apt to succumb easily to a fatal coldness ; and so the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The text is a good instance of Christ’s method in persuading men into the higher life of faith and sacrifice. He has been discoursing on the three primary constituents of religion—almsgiving, worship, fasting. He does not, indeed,

once stop to argue their obligation or their helpfulness. That he takes for granted. His teaching about all three of them is of a precautionary character, and directed against the characteristic fault of the time—ostentatiousness. If they gave alms, and prayed, and fasted, not because they loved their neighbour, and thirsted for God, and wished to discipline their own spirits, but to win the praise of men, and to hear their neighbours whisper, “See how good they are !” the reward they coveted should indeed be theirs, for what it was worth. But presently, when, at a woeful distance from them, the glories of the invisible world opened out before their eyes, none of these things would be found to have followed them. Their money, their prayers, their fasting, would all be seen to have been quite thrown away, so far as any reward in heaven is concerned—laid up on earth, and therefore rewarded there. Not to be found, not to be rewarded, in heaven.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” says our Lord ; appealing, you observe, to two supreme instincts in the nature of man—that of forethought and that of acquisitiveness. As if to say, “Be not so short-sighted as to live and plan only for the present ; think of eternity, and lay up in that blessed home, which you are wont to call heaven, treasures and possessions which will be imperishable, and will meet you after death, for you to keep and enjoy for ever.”

Two simple questions stand out in front of us here, and our careful answers to them ought in some way to help us to turn our lives to usury.

1. What are the treasures which we are to lay up in Heaven ?

2. In what does the laying up consist ?

1. Now, the treasures which we are to lay up in heaven, to be ready for us when we come, presumably correspond with the three great duties of the religious life already enforced by our Lord—may not inexactly be described as their outcome and result. Friendship is to be earned by kindness, of which almsgiving is at least one expression; and do not be startled by what may seem a bald way of wording it, or suppose, in consequence, that almsgiving is the only way of earning it. You remember the closing admonition in the parable of the unjust steward: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." You remember, again, how, on an occasion of being bidden to a feast, the Lord said to those who bade Him, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Once more, you remember how, in the parable of the last judgment, those on the right hand answer the Judge, saying, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? . . . And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Thus it is that one treasure, which should meet us in heaven, and which we are to lay up there now, which shall be incorruptible, and undefiled, and never fade away, is the love of grateful souls. And, I ask, can there be a greater, a sweeter, a nobler, or one more divine? There may be divers ways of earning that gratitude—ways of body and

spirit, of precept and example, of sympathy and counsel, of warning and reproof. The love of wife and husband, whose souls have grown into each other by the tenderest and deepest of associations, and which survives parting, loneliness, and death; the love of a child to a parent, who has trained and taught it; the love of a soul to a pastor, who has brought it to the feet of Jesus to hear His Word; the love of an outcast to one who neither despised it nor despaired of it, but made a long arm of love to lift it out of the pit, and set its feet on a rock; the love of a little scholar to a Christian teacher, who taught it that God's love was its best possession; the love of a strong friend, who in a moment of golden opportunity dared to bring Jesus to the searing conscience of a thoughtless youth. My brethren, as you anticipate the moment when the cloud lifts, and you pass behind the veil to see your Judge, can you count on any one likely to be waiting for you at the gate, and to welcome you with the joy that only the redeemed can know? Has it ever even occurred to you that it is your duty as well as your honour to glorify Christ by using your time and your talents for His service—by acts of charity, of course, and deeds of sacrifice, but also by words which move, and by example which inspires? For almsgiving does not only mean the giving of money. It may or may not be yours to say with the apostle, "Silver and gold have I none." It is love that gives just what it has to give—of courtesy, of sympathy, of friendship, and prayers. We are each sent into this world, not feebly to complain of its badness, but manfully to try to make it better; not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,

and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The question should surely come home to us—In what way are we doing this, if indeed we are doing it at all?

Another treasure which we are to lay up in heaven is knowledge, and, of all kinds of knowledge, the best, and the most profound, and the most satisfying, and the most dignifying—the knowledge of God in Christ; that knowledge which is eternal life, and which grows and matures through prayer.

Two questions you may reasonably interpose here. One is, how is it possible to conceive of our imperfect human knowledge as in any sense or degree a permanent or substantial treasure, which we shall not so much meet again as actually take with us, out of a world of shadows into the world of realities; from a place where we speak as children, and understand as children, and think as children, and know but in part, to a place where childish things will be put away, and we shall know even as we are known?

Surely, however, it is quite reasonable to suppose, not only that the laws of the human mind are eternal and immutable, and that they will continue to operate in the life to come, though unhampered by the restrictions which now fetter them, and under new conditions which will give wings to thought, and perhaps altogether substitute intuition for reason. Also that, so far as we can see, the knowledge we possess, though scanty and fragmentary, yet if solid as far as it goes, only waits for new environments and enfranchised faculties to be deepened and widened and matured. It is certain that all mental cultivation, if only for the sake of the discipline that goes with it, must be an acquisition in the sense of those final results on which death can make

no real impression. The incessant accumulating stock of knowledge of the best and highest things will, I suppose, be one of the loftiest occupations of the æons in front, infinite in its scope, and elevating in its processes. Let no one think that honest study of any kind is waste.

Surely, if the works of God sought out of all them that have pleasure therein declare His glory, and manifest His handiwork, it is His mind, His person, His nature, His purpose, that it most helps us to know, and that in proportion to our knowledge of them convey to us eternal life. What He is, what He thinks, what He desires, what He forbids, in the perfection of His glorious attributes, in the revelation of His eternal purpose, the angels desire to look into; but the Church is privileged to possess the word of the Incarnate Son.

If you ask what prayer has to do with knowledge, in the sense of helping us to lay it up as a treasure in heaven, I answer—Much every way. Prayer, with all knowledge that touches God, vitalizes and solemnizes and deepens it. It helps us to see His face, and to hear His voice, and to feel His presence, and to touch His hand. It helps us to know that He is our Father. It reveals sin, and it proclaims pardon; it indicates the mystery of evil, and it shows us the way to escape from its awful power. I do not say that the habit or spirit of prayer is essential to all knowledge; I do say, that where there is no sense of God, no spiritual contact with the invisible world, the deepest part of this wonderful nature is ignored, and its necessities denied, and its loftiest aspirations crushed, and in the end there is a spiritual indifference, which robs the soul of its true nobleness, and a deterioration of the moral sense which means loss all round. Oh for more devoutness! By devoutness,

I do not mean merely the emotion and excitement of a quick, mobile, but maybe shallow spirit, but that height and depth of serene and intelligent fellowship which is stirred by service, and deepened by knowledge, and elevated by thought, and most of all fed by prayer. And do not think lightly of knowledge as a help to devoutness. Our Lord has said that it is eternal life to know God. Prayer and knowing react on each other.

The other treasure of which I spoke was character, the result of fasting. It has often been observed that our Lord did not inculcate fasting; for an age which practised it such admonition was unnecessary. But He gave them regulations to make their fasting profitable. While, further, He did not, like John the Baptist, enjoin it on His own disciples while He was with them, He distinctly intimated that when He was gone they would fast. The proper object of fasting is the discipline of character, and the ultimate value of it is constant self-control. It is, of course, a great mistake to suppose that abstinence from food is the only kind of abstinence that the Church favours, or the soul requires. It is even possible that abstinence from food is just the one kind of abstinence which we are not to practise, because it would be prejudicial to health, and therefore to usefulness. The essence of the matter surely is, the denying or limiting ourselves for a certain time of some innocent and even laudable enjoyment, that we may not be brought under the power of it, however innocent and laudable it may be, and that we may become the absolute masters of our own will so as to learn the true secret of manful freedom.

In conclusion, let me offer you some few practical and simple counsels, to help you in each of these matters to lay up treasures in heaven.

First, if you would lay up the treasure of friendship, try to discover (God will help you) what service you can best do, or what person you can best help. Let it be, if circumstances so permit, an additional and exceptional service. A sick person to nurse, an afflicted heart to comfort, a little child to teach, a lonely friend to write to or see. The duty will be made plain to you, if you wish it to be made plain; and as your day, so your strength will be. For to earn love you must give love, and as you give love, it will be given you again—"good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Of course it may happen that your days are already filled with ample and suitable duties, and that to add more would simply mean and make what you do now less well done than before—which would be loss, not gain. In such a case, try to do what you are doing with more zeal, and exactness, and joy, and self-devotion. You shall have your reward in the love of God constantly shed into your heart by the Holy Ghost. Be well assured that one subject studied, and in a sense mastered, every year—with earnest prayer preventing and following it—will enrich your spirit, and deepen your capacity for the vision of God.

My friends, "who can tell how oft he offendeth?" I cannot—you cannot. Let us search our hearts and turn to the Lord. Who of us is not guilty from time to time of selfishness and indolence, of envy and jealousy, of levity and self-indulgence, of pride and vanity, of hastiness and resentment? Let us be on our watch against sins of the tongue and of the temper, of the mind and of the flesh. The soul that thirsts for God, for the living God, shall be satisfied. The soul that longs to be delivered from the power of sin shall have its blessed freedom. The soul

that wishes for the company of Jesus Christ shall often hear a gentle, a wounded, Hand knocking at the door—in a word, asking to be let in. The soul that longs to have its treasures in heaven need not fear to be disappointed, if only it will seek and earn them here, by the service of man and the fellowship of God.

SYMPATHY.

“Those who bring sunshine to the hearts of others cannot keep it from themselves.”

SYMPATHY.

Preached in Winchester Cathedral, Sexagesima Sunday, 1892.

“Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?”—2 COR. xi. 29.

AN attempt has lately been made by an ingenious and orthodox divine to trace from his writings the spiritual development of St. Paul. The hypothesis has nothing about it to startle the Christian thinker; and so long as no divergence can be established inconsistent with his inspired authority, or other than would inevitably arise from the maturity of years, and the deepening wisdom of accumulating experience, it is only what we should antecedently expect from one who, like His master, presumably grew in wisdom, and whose mind, just because it was not dead, was a living and expanding organism. The chapter from which the text is taken sets us thinking on a striking phenomenon in the personality of the apostle—I mean the growth of and mellowing of his character through the discipline of life. From the time that we first come upon him, with them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen, and then going out with a fierce joy to watch the martyr die, to the day when he was led out of the imperial city—“Paul the aged”—himself to be offered up upon the service and sacrifice of his faith, a vista of

noble years seem gradually to transfigure him into an ever more tender and yet still majestic beauty. The oftener that he is called to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the more brightly is the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal flesh.

I invite you seriously to meditate on a subject which ought to be very helpful to all of us, both in its historic and exemplary aspect—the value of circumstances in the maturing of character. A man does what he is, as well as is what he does. His manners make him; but what makes his manners? It is possible, of course, to think too much of circumstances—to speak of ourselves, in the pessimistic cant of the hour, as the helpless victims of destiny, and so to throw back our moral responsibility on Almighty God. It is possible, also, to think too little of them, and to refuse to discover, greatly to the loss of strength and comfort, the sovereign providence of a Father. The simple truth is, that what we call circumstances fall more or less into three distinct groups, each demanding recognition, intelligence, and faith. There are the circumstances in which God and ourselves concur and co-operate, where it is impossible to distinguish His acting from ours. There are the circumstances for which we are ourselves solely responsible, and which conscience in its voice of righteousness forbids our ascribing to any other volition than our own. There are also the circumstances of our birth, our environment, our physical and intellectual gifts, and not a few critical incidents in the course of our life's journey, for which the only reasonable and dutiful way of accounting is simply to say about them that they happen by the will of God. About them all, however, the blessed conviction of this same apostle comes home to the believer's heart as

infallibly true : “ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

“ Who is weak, and I am not weak ? who is offended, and I burn not ? ” Now, here, as perhaps we may feel the apostle to have unconsciously summarized it, in the sublime and yet inevitable result of all those unparalleled and continuous and magnificent hardships, with which, through the love of Christ constraining him, he rejoiced to labour for the salvation of the world, we have a glimpse into his life, which makes us instantly see how little St. Luke’s narrative has enabled us to appreciate of his work and sufferings. We are also helped to understand how the career of a solitary and despised Hebrew has had loftier and more permanent and more complete blessing for the race than any life ever lived—but one. It also should enable us to learn—is it quite presumptuous to say so?—that but for this unrivalled catalogue of sacrifice and peril, not only could St. Paul not have done what he succeeded in doing, but he could not have been the St. Paul to do it. Some things we know about him ; some we infer ; some we guess. Here, however, we read, as by anticipation, the divine answer to his own noble prayer, when we ask ourselves the question, What was the apostle before these mighty sorrows transformed him?—“ That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” We seem familiar enough with the salient features of his natural character. We can appreciate also, without too much effort, how easy, nay, how inevitable it would be, that these great qualities would be liable, but for vigilance and self-discipline and close fellowship with God, to become exaggerated, and to lose proportion and relation to

other also indispensable qualities, and through such exaggeration to forfeit influence and stir dislike. Further, we can understand, from our own trifling experience, how in moments not his best, nor his strongest, he would be sorely tempted to throw up his grand task with that impetuosity which makes him so lovable, and without which he could never have accomplished a hundredth part of this work; now keenly disappointed, now insolently silenced, now undermined, now passionately assailed. "Without were fightings, within were fears." Yet also we are to see the good hand of his God making his way plain, and his enemies ashamed; bringing victory out of defeat; and whether at Philippi or at Rome, making the things which happened to him turn out rather for the furtherance of the gospel. Stripes do not silence the music in his voice; nor can Nero's awful house chill the divine joy in his spirit. It was the hymns he sang in the dungeon that brought about the salvation of the Philippian jailor. "Rejoice in the Lord alway," is his message from the Prætorium which still stirs the heart of the world.

More than one stratum of circumstances in his ministerial career, concurring in one force of controlling and sanctifying discipline, which, when added to his manifest opportunities and Roman citizenship, his rabbinical and secular training, his cultured and masculine and keen dialectic, and his burning zeal, earned him his spiritual perfection, won for him his final triumph. The personal animosity of the really devout Jews, both men and women, in such places as Perga, must have been an incomprehensible grief to him. Then, as his immediate reward for loyally accepting the counsel of the Church in the matter of purifying himself in the temple, he nearly lost his life, quite forfeited his free-

dom. The treacherous and, to us, almost incomprehensible opposition of false brethren at Rome, who, thinking to add affliction to his bonds, preached Christ of envy and strife ; the interruption during four years of his public ministry at a time when the rapid spread of the gospel, and the critical rivalry between the two great parties in the Church, seemed to make his presence on the spot essential both to unity and to life ; last, but not least, the thorn in the flesh—no doubt a bodily infirmity, not fatal, nor indeed vitally destructive of usefulness, but giving a painful uncertainty to the accomplishment of his cherished activities, and stirring among those who did not personally care for him more vexation than pity ;—all these are circumstances in his daily and changeful lot which helped to heat and keep heated that crucible of divine trial, in which the dross was being ever purged from his sinful though regenerate nature ; which must have helped him to take and utter as the constant language of his soul, “ My times are in thy hands.”

But in this chapter we come across other trials still, and perhaps of a subtler and more penetrating kind. There is, first, the bodily humiliation and anguish, whereby the iron entered into his soul. “ In stripes above measure. . . Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice ” (probably by pagan hands) “ was I beaten with rods.” Well, some of us may have learned that any kind of pain is power, and “ sorrow is the deepest thing in the world ; ” but when shame and degradation go with it for Christ’s sake, it is multiplied tenfold. Of perils of waters he writes, “ Thrice I suffered shipwreck,” and this before the tempest in the sea of Adria ; yet more terrible still—“ a night and a day I have been in the deep,” watching the sun go down, to leave him hopeless in the darkness and storm ; waiting for the

tedious hours to go, and the sun to rise, and to see no ship on the horizon. How this must have helped him to feel the sustaining presence of the living God as nothing else could, and to say as one had said before, with awful meaning in the words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"!

Of "deaths oft," he writes, as also in the First Epistle to these same Corinthians, "I die daily." I suppose there is nothing that so awes and stills and hallows the human spirit as to go down into the valley of the shadow of death, to the far end of it, and to feel the golden gates all but opening, and the light and the music come through, and then all close again, for the time is not yet come. Out of the dark valley we go, back into life, but with a deep awe on our spirits, with the feeling of having seen God, such as does not leave us for years. This was the apostle's experience, not once or twice, but, as he tells us, often; and what a sense it must have given him of the uncertainty of life, and the vanity of human success, and the nobleness of duty, and the nearness and loveliness of God. Of weariness and painfulness, of cold and nakedness, he writes, as of common daily things. They must have made the spiritual world very real to him, and the hope of glory the constant gladness of his soul. Elsewhere he writes of having "no certain dwelling-place;" here of "journeyings often," of "cold and nakedness." To a young strong man these are trifles; his pride of manhood almost makes him glory in them. As years multiply and strength decays, they are heavy and not ignoble burdens.

There is one thing more—the noblest, the hardest, the blesseddest of all; that which never left him, sleeping or waking, lying down or rising up; with friends, or in solitude; in prayer to God, or in communion with his own spirit—

“That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.” These he had to correct, these to admonish; now to console, now to rebuke. All sent to him, for all needed him, and it would have pained him more if they had not come for what they wanted. Yet sometimes with anguish of soul and many tears he sent them his answer; sometimes, too, let us confess, with words that smote and scorn that burned. The end and result of it all—to borrow the words of the text—was a sublime and indescribable sympathy. “Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?”

Sympathy has two sides to it—that of pity, and that of indignation; that which yearns with compassion, and that which is wroth with sin. Just as with the Lord, we read that He had compassion on the multitude, because they had been a long time with Him, and had nothing to eat, and had come from far; also, that He rebuked a ruler of the synagogue with anger, because he discouraged a woman from coming to be healed on the sabbath day. The great apostle as much wins our affection by his tears as our respect by his sternness. His sympathy, remember, was not the transient spasm of a sudden emotion, nor the cheap utterance of easy and turgid phrases, which boasted much and held nothing; like the gleam of a winter’s sun, soon passing again behind the clouds, and only leaving disappointment behind. It was the continual, inevitable, unconscious going out of active love from a heart that overflowed with it, to all who needed it, to all who came in his way. It helped him to be all things to all men, through the power of a vivid imagination, which enabled him to put himself in his neighbour’s place, and of a moral sensibility, which ever stirred him to hate that which was evil, and to cleave to that

which was good—whereby by all means he saved many; I say, further, it was the discipline of his life that was the secret of it, that gave him the will and the power to save.

To conclude: first let us observe that notwithstanding his weak health, and his long imprisonments, and his manifold disappointments, and his bitter opposition, the apostle found time to complete a work which has withstood the storms and outlived the empires of eighteen centuries; and that weak as often he felt to be, beaten as often he seemed to be, he was always strong enough for the duty God called him to accomplish, and his life was not taken till his work was done.

My friends, you especially to whom working for God is at once the honour and delight of your lives, never fear that you will not have time enough for all the good works God has ordained for you to walk in; this rather fear, that your will may be slack, and your sacrifices few. God is wise, and He knows how to accomplish His own purposes. God is strong, and He will command strength for you. God is just, and not with Pharaoh's justice. God is love, and He does not grudge us the joy of thankful duty. We are immortal till our work is done. When it is done, we can be spared for Paradise.

See the gift to claim: the gift which binds all perfection, transfigures all activities, satisfies all necessities, ennobles all experiments; the gift which is at once the nature of God, and His method—the gift of Christian sympathy. In some it is born full-orbed, and so easier; with others, the germ is in them, but it needs cultivating. All need the stirring and deepening and educating of it by the discipline of sorrow. Welcome sorrow, that you may understand more perfectly, and touch more skilfully, and

speak more tenderly ; ay, in your very silence, making it felt how your heart loves if your lips are dumb. Oh, to have more of this gift of love !—for it turns earth into heaven, and makes man the very sacrament of God. Ask for it, and remember that it can come in only one way, and let it come in that way ; and when it comes, keep it, and deserve to have more.

Once more—get the joy to learn that all things are yours, and that you are Christ's, and that Christ is God's ; and so that you are not more His precious possession than that God Himself is yours. I think that the end and reward of all sorts of sorrow is to learn how to fall back upon God, and rest in Him as our one Portion and Joy. That God in Christ must have been to St. Paul. The life we have been contemplating would have been an intolerable misery without it. With God, every tear he shed, every pang he knew, was but a new opportunity for the divine sweetness. Some day, when God summons us, we too shall see Him face to face. Then we shall understand, as we cannot understand now, that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” and that the secret of the apostle means the fellowship of Christ.

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING.

“There is but one possible final proof of Christianity, and that is its own essential truth.”

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING.

Preached in Rochester Cathedral, December 4, 1883.

“Where is the promise of His coming?”—2 PET. iii. 4.

THIS was a scoff, St. Peter says. None the less important for that; none the less demanding an answer. It ought not, indeed, to be hard to prove the shallowness of it, if only from the superficial nature of the reason on which it stands. Why was this coming—the supreme, triumphal, spousal coming of the Son of man—scoffed at in this insolent fashion, and His followers taunted with folly in expecting an event which it was just as reasonable to ask and hope for as for a child to cry for the moon? On the ground, I suppose—in our own day, so calmly, so blandly, and with a sense of such superior wisdom urged against the supernatural, and all related to it—that “miracles do not happen.” “All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” In other words, the physical order is the only order of which the human mind can be asked to take cognizance. The invisible region of the universe, where lie concealed, none the less potent or real for that, the mighty springs of will and mind, and government and providence, is to be treated as if it did not

exist, because no method is open to us for questioning or analyzing it. As we do not see it, and may not examine it, therefore, for all practical purposes, it cannot be said to be. How this sorry view of things limits the area of observation, dwarfs and ignores some of the loftiest capacities of man, degrades us by limiting the knowable to the senses, robs the spirit of its grandest inspirations and noblest ideals; how, if even universally accepted and acted on, it would inevitably send us back to something far worse than the despair and the paganism of the Cæsars, may the Church never suffer the world to discover, nor herself be base enough to permit.

The text contains two ideas—

I. The coming.

II. The delay.

My friends, let us, too, ask this question at a time when it is so suitable, so dutiful, so helpful, to ask it. So suitable; for the one thought that solemnizes this blessed season is the Second Advent. So dutiful; for it honours our Lord to put questions to Him about it, so long as they come from eager and reverent love. Helpful; for ought it not to stir unity, diligence, prayer? Humbling, also; for how many of us really desire that coming, as the goal of our felicity, and the crowning of our real happiness? Were the King of saints to come back this night—allowance duly made for the awe every soul must feel at the first sight of God—could we sincerely say, as the prophet tells us some will say, “This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is our God; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation”?

I. The COMING. Both the Testaments say much of Christ’s coming; and if, in the literal, historical sense of

the words, there are but two real visible comings spoken of, each completing an epoch in the Church's history—the first at the Incarnation, the second at the Final Judgment—in an inferior and mystical, but still actual sense, this promise of the coming has continually and solemnly fulfilled itself, at sundry times and in divers manners, whether in woeful judgments, or in marked eras of light and beatitude, to nations and to Churches, to congregations and to individual souls. He came to Israel, when Titus drove his ploughshare of indescribable anguish through the hearts of the miserable Jews; and to France, when the Revolution, that began just a century ago, and is still a living volcano, woke her up out of a hideous trance, and made the nations say, “Here is the God of Judgment;” and to Europe, when the Reformation, for which we may surely still give humble thanks to God, gave the soul freedom and the conscience truth; and to England, when Augustine landed in Kent with a second message of the everlasting gospel; or when, a century ago, the doctrines of grace, with all their subsequent developments, and not yet concluded revivals, whether of life, or worship, or duty, brought a blessed resurrection to the Church. It is He who visits the soul, when it is converted to repentance and devotion; it is He who comes to a congregation or a parish, when a pastor comes or goes, or a wave of spiritual life baptizes a crowd of souls for the Word of God to have free course and be glorified. He who walketh among the seven golden candlesticks, trims them with oil, and makes them burn more brightly. But it is His coming to them that does it. Every gift of His grace is His presence brought close to the soul.

Yet these are but premonitions and foreshadowings of

that final and royal Advent, when He shall come for the revelation of His glory, the vindication of His government, the judgment of humanity, and the crowning of His saints. It will be public and supernatural, and be the end.

He will reveal His glory, for all His saints will be with Him; and they will be His glory—those who loved not their lives unto the death, whom His example and cross, and love and presence, drew to Him with an irresistible power; the satisfaction of His soul's travail, the spoils from the house of the strong man armed, and the joy unspeakable of the angels in light. He shall come, as St. Paul says, "to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe."

He will come to vindicate His government, as to its righteousness, wisdom, and mercy. Many hard things are said against Him now. He is silent, and waits, knowing that one day He will justify Himself. Who of us that observes and thinks but has, must have, difficulties which he cannot answer, listens to cavils to which silence is the best reply? To such He says, "In your patience possess ye your souls." These things perplex, try, even sadden us; and sometimes sadness and distress are the inevitable accompaniments of loyalty and saintliness. There is a morning at hand, which shall be without clouds. When Christ comes back, these shadows shall flee away.

He will come to judge the world; and in one respect that judgment will need neither witnesses nor sentence. Each man's own soul will be witness and judge against itself. Memory, relentless and awakened memory, will bring up out of its hoards our past—all our past; and if the blood of Christ has not washed our robes and made them white as with a fuller's whiteness, the vision of the

spotless Christ will entirely and tremendously reveal the guilt and hideousness of sin. Yes, of all kinds of loneliness, the bitterest is, that there a man's own faculty of self-defence deserts him. Of all sorts of reproof, none is so stinging, so abiding, as the voice of conscience in the soul.

He will also come to crown His saints. "Come, ye blessed of My Father." It is hard to get to the bottom of the blessedness of those words. Certainly we shall hear them pronounced to others. May we hope to listen to them for ourselves! Christ's reward to us will, I suppose, be threefold; it will be sanctity, dignity, and service. Sanctity: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." But some will be more like Him than others, having loved him more. Dignity: "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on My throne." Our dignity will be in our nearness to Him. Some will be nearer than others then, for they have walked more closely with Him here. Service: "His servants shall serve Him." He will choose the service, and we shall render it. And with what untold joy! Even now in our best moments—and we are not always at our best—when heaven most enters into our souls, we know something of the blessedness and of the honour of doing something for Him here, however little. There, when sickness will not weaken us, nor old age unnerve us, when selfishness will not decline His offers, nor self-love demur to them, it will indeed be our meat and drink to do our Father's will, and there will be neither failure, weariness, nor decay.

II. But there is the DELAY. "Where is the promise of His coming?" And the fact of this delay is not only admitted, but almost emphasized by the apostle's explanation afterwards: "The Lord is not slack concerning His

promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. . . . Wherefore account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." You ask why does the Lord delay? "Long-suffering," is the answer; the patience of the Redeemer's hope. Speaking with trembling lips, and with a sense of unworthiness and incapacity to comprehend the purpose of His all-wise and all-merciful will, we may gather from Holy Scripture these two reasons.

First in our Lord's own words: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." But it takes time to preach it; and even now we are losing time. How much more did the Church lose it, and fail to see her duty about it, from the day that the Moslem invasion devastated the East and South, until the quite recent time when the idea of missions dawned like a revelation on mankind! At this moment there must be millions and millions of souls on which not the feeblest ray from the face or the cross of Christ has for one moment lingered; and let the Church speed on her way with flight as eager and heart as joyous as an angel's from heaven with a message to some penitent soul, it is still a gigantic task, and a long one, even to preach Christ once to all. Not by any means that the mere presence of Christianity in the world has not proved a living force for its improvement and happiness in a thousand ways. It has been well said that "Christianity is the great reforming power of the world;" and any one who needs to be convinced by it should read a book recently published, called "Brace's Gesta Christi," which by a series of solid facts lucidly arranged, and forcibly pressed, and intelligently explained, proves by an accumu-

lating argument how jurisprudence and war, the laws of nations and the dignity of women, marriage and slavery, hospitality and human society at large, have felt the breath of Jesus of Nazareth as He passed by—got healing, though they knew not from whom. The principles, ideals, and precepts of Christianity are still the light and medicine of the world.

But there is yet another reason why the Lord delays His coming; where we touch the border of deep and even dark mysteries; where wise and humble lips will not presume to dogmatize, but where the heart of faith, groping for the light, thinks, hopes, and adores. Those who have a tender compassion for souls, and who, looking out upon the heathen world abroad, and on our heathenized masses at home, think with heart as well as reason what difference the “slant of the sun” in spiritual as well as temporal things must make in the chances of a soul for its life and goodness; those, too, who observe the gulf that separates even professing Christians in their moral and spiritual condition as they pass out to God; above all, those who rest upon the divine righteousness, as upon the rock of adamant, and who again and again say to themselves, as doubts, and chills, and fears, and perplexities disturb and harass them, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”—and are not some of you among them?—these seem to see in this delay of the Second Advent the blessed mystery of the redeeming purpose, not indeed fully revealed to us, lest sinners should presume on it—which nevertheless is, and fulfils itself according to the pleasure of Him who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should be saved, while some make light of the Saviour’s own words of the worm

that dieth not, and of the fire that never shall be quenched.

The fact, already hinted, is that millions of human souls, brought into this world by God's providence, without any choice of their own, have passed through and out of it without a single opportunity of savingly knowing Him as their reconciled Father in Christ. The principle is that He will never condemn one of His own creatures for losing a salvation which was never offered to him; and that in some way or other, and at some time or other, we may humbly expect Him, from the hints that Holy Scripture scatters on the subject, if not what we must independently and assuredly expect of His righteousness and love, to enable them, as He has enabled us, to see Him and live.

Thus reverent thinkers are coming increasingly to feel it to be likely that the key to the problems of what is called eschatology is to be found in our blessed Lord's personal administration of the intermediate state; and that He who has since His resurrection distinctly described Himself as having "the keys of hell and of death," Who before His resurrection went and preached to the spirits in prison, may, in that waiting-time for His return, which certainly is not a period of utter unconsciousness, be a centre of light and salvation and goodness to human souls, who here have had no real chance of accepting Him, in a way and by methods of which we can form no conception. But if this be so, it is at least another justification of His delayed return. "Jesus Himself was not afraid for God," though no one loved mankind as He did, no one knew God as He did, no one is so likely to be jealous for His Father's honour. If we, with all reverence and humility, still cannot help sometimes putting to our-

selves that noble question, "What is worthy of God?" while conscious of our inadequacy fully to answer it—conscious, also, that not our own spiritual instincts alone are sufficient to answer it, but that in Holy Scripture we must also seek a lamp for our feet, and a light for our path,—then we shall see in the divine delay but another instance of that patience of God which Christ's own parable illustrates, in the shepherd seeking the lost sheep "until he find it;" also we shall see how there is but "one limit to the redeeming power of God's love in Christ—the limit of a human will which persistently rejects the divine."

"Where is the promise of His coming?" To conclude—this Advent, this coming of Christ, is at once a test, and a crisis, and a motive, and a joy.

As I have already hinted, it is a test; and, O Christian people, were He to come to-night, how should you and I meet Him? Is His coming a promise for you? Of course our going to Him in death, any more than His coming to us in judgment, cannot have power to alter our spiritual condition, or to effect a change which has not been effected before. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

No one can go forth to meet Him whose lamp is not trimmed and his light burning. Only those in conscious union with Him, and who know Him to be the Lord of their hearts, can even think of that return without infinite trouble and distress. Only those who are trying to serve Him, praying to resemble Him, and content to suffer for Him, can claim Him when He comes back as their Master and Lord.

“Where is the promise of His coming?” Is it a promise for you? It will be a crisis. Whatever it may be the purpose of God’s redeeming love to do between death and judgment for those who have had no opportunities for salvation and goodness, Scripture gives no faintest hope for supposing that such a condition of mercy can be prolonged after judgment. The great revelation will then have been made, and with its final issues. The revelation of Christ to man will have resulted in the revelation of man to himself; and what can there be to follow? “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” The choice will have been made already “between a life growing rich unto God, or starving upon self—its real final choice between the true, the eternal life, and the eternal death of the heart.” That choice you at least, beloved brethren, are making now, possibly have already made; and the acts of each hour are more surely and finally committing you to it. What I want you to see is that the Second Advent will reveal and confirm it, and that for those who have chosen against Christ—or, what comes to the same thing, have steadfastly refused to choose Him, and have drifted down the tides of the world, and have consciously and resolutely and finally turned from Him—grace will be over, in mercy as well as in judgment, when Jesus Christ comes back.

“Where is the promise of His coming?” Is the coming a promise to you? The advent is also a motive. For steadfastness of purpose, for diligence in duty, for meekness of temper, for sweetness of charity, for manfulness of self-control, for completeness of self-culture,

for exactness of knowledge, for mellowness of thought. Memory disciplined, habits cultivated, reason exercised, taste matured; the thinker's steadfastness, the speaker's carefulness, the student's love of knowledge, and the writer's use of it;—all these, be sure, are steadily and inevitably accumulating their final and magnificent reward, when Christ comes back to give to each man according as his works shall be. Yes, not only for our moral goodness and our spiritual capacity shall we each have our place of glory and our raiment of light, but for the full use of all our powers, and the diligent improvement of all our capacities, and the beneficent employment of all our resources, and the ready energy of all our opportunities, and the steady maturing of all our gifts, shall our judgment and our crown be given. Nothing lost, nothing forgotten, nothing despised, of effort, and diligence, and thought, and perseverance. All shall come up to be recognized; and the righteousness of love shall apportion our felicity.

Now, do not you see how this should give a dignity, a grandeur, a kind of awful significance, to the meanest life, if but a Christian life, and lived in all good conscience before God, such as no human words can say? So I ask again, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Is that coming a promise to you?

Once more, it will be joy—to those to whom Jesus Christ now is the best possession of their hearts. Joy for what it will reveal, remove, and bestow.

It will reveal Christ. I dare not, I cannot, I must not, say what it will be when we first gaze on Him. It is too sacred to chatter about with these soiled lips; all we can say is, it will not disappoint us; "we shall be

satisfied, when we awake, with His likeness ;” we shall each see Him at once, and it will be as if only we saw Him, and He saw only us, and seeing Him will be our transfiguration.

It will remove all stain and germ of sin ; all thought and sadness of separation ; all fear of infirmity ; all cloud and mist of confusion and despair.

It will bestow ; and we should ever remember that, in the world to come, space and time will be things of the past. It will bestow youth that will never fade, knowledge that will ever widen, duties which will at once continue life and expand it ; sanctity which will more and more comprehend the perfection of God. Earthly and temporal limitations will be over ; our society shall become an ever-present companionship of the redeemed ; and friendship will not be a melancholy dream, but a solid delight. As we look into each other’s faces in that “blessed country,” the thought of an inevitable parting will not shoot sudden sadness through our souls. “For ever with the Lord.” Then we shall see that God in Christ makes heaven.

Once again, “Where is the promise of His coming ?” Is His coming a promise for you ?

DEATH NOT DEATH.

“It is beautiful to see how death gives liberty to life.”

DEATH NOT DEATH.

*Preached in the Cathedral, Victoria, Vancouver Island,
September 4, 1887.*

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.”—JOHN viii. 51.

THE Pharisees were startled at this saying, and we cannot wonder at it. It so flatly contradicted the universal experience of mankind, that every one challenged it. It asserted so pointedly the personal claims of Christ, that there seemed to be but one of two alternatives : either He had a devil, and so was not accountable for His sayings ; or He was a blasphemer, and then He deserved to be stoned. Christ, we may observe, expected, and indeed intended this.

Nay, it was His method, and He had often used it before. A sincere teacher, whatever his doctrine may be, aims at two results with his hearers. He must make them think, that justice may be done to His teaching. He must make them feel, that their convictions may pass into their lives. Now, wherever there is stubborn prejudice, and that inveterate repugnance to spiritual teaching which a hard formalism invariably engenders in the mind, a gentle and winning persuasiveness will only stir contempt. The crust of obstinate traditionalism needs to be suddenly, even

roughly, penetrated with the spear's thrust of a sharp apophthegm. The iron flail of a crushing dialectic must mercilessly silence the self-love that does not so much fear error as the shame of being detected in it. It is a lesson for all teachers, of all kinds of truth, and with every sort of learner, that to give even a painful shock to the mind by the blunt utterance of a paradox is sometimes the kindest as well as the wisest way of training and stimulating it, and that next to a love of truth for its own sake comes in importance the habit of an absolute intrepidity in stating it, without too much weighing the consequences, or too much impatience for the results.

Christ's saying is of world-wide significance. Does not each of you, my brethren, feel that it is for him? He introduced it by a formula which with Him always indicates a change of subject. "Verily, verily." He expressed it in words which the Jews immediately afterwards misquoted, and which should be exactly weighed, to ascertain what they really convey. That enemy, whom we are continually fighting, who often has to wait, but who is content to wait, knowing that he will have us at last—"death"—is a familiar word enough. "My saying" marks the whole revelation of Christ in its organic completeness, and not any one feature of it. To "keep" expresses rather the idea of intent watching than of safe guarding. The "seeing" death, in the original, indicates a long, steady, exhaustive contemplation, whereby we do not merely glance at and perceive, but become slowly and increasingly acquainted with the nature of the object we look at. And the sentence paraphrased will run thus: "Whoever accepts, observes, acts out My teaching, while he must not expect not to die, will find death when it comes so utterly transformed for

him, that his dread of it will be gone ; he will cease to anticipate it with anguish ; nay, he will conquer even while he yields."

First let us examine Christ's statement about death, and then observe the magnificent inference that flows from it. "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." Death, as we call it, affects us in four ways. The body it ultimately dissolves into its constituent elements, until it finally disappears. Even before it lays its last grip on us it is wont to disintegrate the organs and tissues of our physical life by a slow and often humiliating decay. The conscience, I do not say with all, but certainly with a great number, it penetrates with the awfully quickening sense of responsibility and the apprehension of inevitable judgment. The will, with all its forces and apparatus of energy and action, it goes to paralyze by a total and final suspension of its opportunities and aspirations. The heart it wounds as with the piercings of a sword. In the fine expression of a living writer, "creatures who love so much have their days shut round with a wall of darkness." All this is a mere matter of experience, which no one in his senses will care to dispute. It would be easy to dilate on it with pathos, or to describe it in thrilling detail ; but each heart has its own sufficient store of sacred and tender memories, and we will leave the curtain closed. Now, Christ says about death that keeping His saying will prevent us from seeing it. Did He mean seeing it before it comes, or seeing it when it comes? Both, probably. The one includes the other. But the idea of anticipation is perhaps paramount. The quite young and the elderly think of it most. It is a mistake constantly to be thinking of it, and it is a risk never to think of it. To scorn it is a nobler error than to dread it,

but scorn is hardly the spirit in which a sinful man should wish to pass to God. Yet it is hard not to be touched even to a melancholy veneration by the stern resolve of sincere spirits, unable to accept revelation in spite of the consolations it inspires; expecting to perish, yet caring to the last for the race it can help no more. Listen to one of the noblest of them; there is a spirit in his words we may all be glad to breathe. "A man will already be in no mean paradise, if at the hour of sunset a good hope shall fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and yet each good cause find yet worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever."¹ There are those, of course—not all of them blatant and licentious atheists—to whom the temper of repentance, and the idea of a Personal God, seem alike impossible. We must not judge them; we leave them to Him who died for them; who reads the inmost secrets of their hearts; who will assuredly save them if He can; who, when they pass into His presence, will look them through and through, and righteously give them as their works shall be.

But what is the saying of Christ which so changes and transforms this "king of terrors;" which turns what would otherwise be an awful plunge into a hideous darkness to a summons to our Father's home? The doctrines contained in it are not indeed many, but without dispute they are unspeakably wonderful. Only Revelation could declare them; only faith can accept them as true.

There is the Incarnation, with those divinely instituted

¹ Mr. John Morley.

ordinances, which convey sacramentally its benefits, and extend its influence to all who rightly receive them. There is the mystery of the atoning cross, which brings peace and liberty and reconciliation to all who approach it in simple penitence.

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

There is the resurrection, first of Christ, the Root and Head of humanity, and hereafter of all who sleep in Him. There is the invisible rule of the ascended Lord, through the Holy Ghost, which He ever pours out on the world. These mighty truths, in their order, and by the virtue inherent in them, and according to our apprehension of them and submission to them, give us to participate even now in that eternal life in Christ which lives on world without end; and in that personal deliverance from the guilt and power of sin which only a divine propitiation, through faith in His blood, can give to the sincere penitent; and in that victory over death through which the resurrection at the last day is, by Christ's own promise, and through Himself the first-fruits of them that slept, finally and everlastingly to emancipate us, and so reunite us to those who have either gone before us, or shall follow after us, in the mighty and pitiful procession of humanity ever slowly marching on towards the tomb.

These great truths, and none but these, meet the deepest needs of our souls about death, answer our sores and difficulties, heal our most beautiful anguish, and in our best moments—which are given us when we need them—almost help us to call it, as St. Francis d'Assisi loved to call it, “Sister” Death. Listen to them. “Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise

him up at the last day." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

"Down below, the church to whose poor window
 Glory by the autumnal leaves is lent ;
 And a knot of worshippers is mourning,
 Missing some one at the Sacrament.

"Down below, cold sunlight on the tombstones,
 And the green wet turf with faded flowers ;
 Winter roses, once like young hopes burning,
 Now beneath the ivy dripped with showers.

"Up above, the host no man can number,
 In white robes, ■ palm in every hand ;
 Each some work sublime for ever working
 In the spacious tracts of that great land.

"Up above, the thoughts that know no anguish,
 Tender care, sweet love for us below ;
 Noble pity, free from anxious terror,
 Larger love without a touch of woe."

(Bishop Alexander.)

I said there is a significant inference from this great saying of Christ. It is this : the continuity of the Christian's life, in its essence, in its aim, in its worship, in its activity, in its sanctity, in its gladness. The life here and hereafter is the same—God dwelling in the soul. The aim here and there is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The common worship is the same, though there will be no temple there. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, be glory and dominion." The activity is the same. If in Paradise we think of it as rest, it is that kind of rest which soothes and girds for coming

action. In the resurrection-life we shall serve Him day and night in His temple, hungering no more, thirsting no more. The sanctity will be the same ; for then, as now, it will be the image of Jesus Christ reproduced in us, only perfectly, and without spot of sin. The joy will be the same. Joy in God, and in serving Him. The new song we shall sing will be but our present one with another stanza to it. For death will be behind, and we shall see the Lamb that was slain. And as we stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire—our foe behind us and Canaan before—we shall strike on our harps even a nobler melody than Miriam struck in the days of old. And this thought of the continuity of our life is a very practical one, for the activities we initiate, the friendships we form, the hopes we indulge, the knowledge we acquire.

Life is so short, some say, and so uncertain. Is there really much use in commencing enterprises, of which perhaps only the foundations may be laid before we are roughly summoned away, and must perish, like a child's castle on the sand, when the devouring tide sweeps all away? Love is natural to us, essential even. We are made to love. We cannot help it. But sometimes we frigidly reason with ourselves about the folly of weaving ties, which when broken—and they are sure to be broken some day—work and twist like cruel setons in our tortured heart. We have hopes, generous, reasonable, noble ; but presently we become almost ashamed of them. The frost steals into our garden before the June nights are over ; we say in our haste we will never plant flowers again. As for knowledge, at the best it is but fragmentary, constantly interrupted by sordid needs and conventional proprieties, by scanty leisure, and the torpor of the weary

brain. Just when we are beginning to discover how little we can know and how little we do know, and there is rapture as well as melancholy in the discovery, the book becomes suddenly dusty on an upper shelf; the midnight lamp ceases to tell the passer-by that a thinker is busy; the tired head is quiet on the last pillow it will ever press; the book is unfinished, the invention but half worked out; for jealous, envious Death is making yet more darkness.

But faith, which unites us to Christ, and builds us up into Him, which apprehends His purpose, and sees His glory, has a very different voice to this, and a far loftier one, in harmony with the voice of Him who says, "Behold, I make all things new." Death, which to those out of Christ is a state, for those in Christ is but an event in life; not even interrupting it, but simply severing its visible association with earth; not, indeed, at all parting us from the possession of each other, only from the society of each other. Those who have left us are still in the Father's house, but in another story of it. Our human earthly duties, whatever they be, homely or august, public or remote from men, are, when faithfully and truly done, links in the great chain and girdle of immortal activities, which death transfigures rather than destroys, which educate and discipline us for those tasks and offices of service which God's wisdom is preparing for those who love Him. If there be a God, and if He be a God of order and of purpose, most of all, if He be a Father—and for Christians, at least, this ought not be too much to assume—we may rest assured that the enigmas of life will one day have their solution, and the fragments of life their skilful piecing into a true harmony; its discipline will bring it full recompense, its sorrowful partings a joyful compensation in the final concourse and everlasting

companionship of radiant souls. In nature they say there is no waste, though there often seems to be; and in the higher sphere of a redeemed creation, God will justify Himself to those who wait for Him, and can patiently trust the silence of His veiled face.

This gospel of the Resurrection is the greatest force of all that is best in humanity. Over the mighty murmur of a turbulent and weeping world there still sounds to us this voice of the risen Jesus, sweet as the dropping of the honeycomb, solemn as the sound of many waters—for us who have yet to get death over, for all who have died and shall die, until death is swallowed up at the coming of the King.

“I am the Resurrection, and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this—believest thou this?”

THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS.

“ Alas ! in the real life, how are we to know when we have reached our end ? ”

THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS.

Preached in Winchester Cathedral, Advent Sunday, 1892.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened.”—REV. XX. 12.

Two things are told us here, of more moment than anything else in the world. They are told us, moreover, on the personal authority of one who knew—knew because he had seen. St. John had passed behind the veil, which so inexorably, yet, it may be, so slightly, separates the visible and the invisible worlds, and he came back to tell the tale, which is short, disappointingly short, yet all, perhaps, that human language could express, or human understandings apprehend. The dead live with God, and the dead are judged. These truths, I say, not only transcend all others, but modify and transfigure all others.¹

The event we call death, right in front of us all, and which one day or other will assuredly visit ourselves, does not terminate existence; it simply translates it into a region beyond sense, there to be emancipated and made perfect. About the life which we now live in the flesh, which often seems so trivial and commonplace, and is so easily forgotten, we are to be judged by the living God.

¹ See Bishop Phillips Brooks' "Twenty Sermons," p. 60.

Our text tells us of the dead, the Judge, the books, the end.

I. When we think of the dead, of their number, their diversity, their separateness, their society, the fancy reels before the awful vision, the reason is tempted to ask if it can be literally true.

Since Abel died until the moment when I spoke my text, what a countless army has tramped, sadly but inevitably, through the valley of the shadow of death, till the corner was turned and the angel beckoned them. Take some of the central names of history, and cluster round them the millions whom they blessed, or ruled, or slew, and they will seem but specks in the great firmament of humanity, by their faint gleaming helping us to understand the millions behind of whom we know nothing, except that they lived, suffered, and disappeared. The Ptolemies and the Caliphs; the awful monarchs who ruled on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates and the Nile; the emperors who, by the waters of the Tiber, conquered and robbed the world; Attila and Tamerlane; Ivan the terrible and Belisarius the unfortunate; the Moors and the Huns; the Crusaders and the Turks; Frederick the Great and Napoleon the First; the countless myriads of China and India; Africa and the islands of the sea; and then the world across the Atlantic, with its buried strata of civilizations and races of which the West knows nothing;—what a mighty crowd, not yet complete, presently to stand before God, for its reward or its doom!

But the interest equals the awfulness. Each human soul there is distinct from every other human soul—will have had its personal history, and conflicts, and opportunities, and duties. To each was given its number of

days, and its term of probation. Then the clock struck, and it was called away. They are together, "small and great," as the apostle calls them; we know not if ranked and placed by any moral law; certainly not described here as in the Lord's own parable, separated one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, yet secretly and severally and inevitably separating themselves as the searching light falls on them from the white throne of God. For they stand before God.

II. Here a word of explanation may be useful to reconcile what St. John saw with what his Lord declared. Christ most distinctly taught that He is to be Judge, because He is the Son of man. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Also in the solemn parable of the last judgment, it is the Son of Man who is to come in His glory, and to sit on the throne of His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. For as Son of Man He has had entire experience of the trials and sorrows of humanity. He has met temptation, and endured hardship, and wept tears, and tasted death. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Now that High Priest is also to be Judge. But this Son of man is also Son of God! If human experience, in one aspect of His office, is essential to His righteousness; on another side, infinite knowledge is indispensable for the fulfilment of His task. But for the fact that He not only understands man, but also has become the Head of humanity, and that each atom of that countless throng has been created, and redeemed, and known, and

ruled, and chastened, and at last sent for by Him who in His Incarnate Person unites the almightiness of God with the personal experience of man, how could He judge us and pronounce our doom justly? Unto God, however, as we stand before Him in that day, all things will be naked and open, known and present, complete and true.

III. The books will be opened. A figure, of course! but what is it that the figure means? Five things, I suppose—memory, conscience, character, privilege, and law.

Memory—that wonderful, undefinable, insoluble function, so artificial and so treacherous, ever so dependent on physical conditions, often curiously impaired by mental wealth, the servant of our will and yet its rebel, failing us when we most need it, torturing us when we could wish the past drowned in the depths of the sea,—this memory, I suppose, when we put off mortality, will flood and overwhelm our spirits; our life-course will suddenly be all before us, and with each most trifling incident our personal history will be found to have been indelibly written on the walls of our own mind.

Conscience will wake, drugged no longer, partial no longer. We can silence it now if we will, and make our own code of laws for it, and be deaf to it when it displeases us, or, what is worse still, coax or force it into a courtly guest that never is so uncivil as to reproach us, or to say us nay. When we see the Judge, all these deceits and phantasms will be swept away in one tremendous moment; we shall see ourselves as we really are, and as God has ever seen us; but “who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?”

There is character. What we shall be then, will be the moral and spiritual result of our entire conscious lives.

Just as the washing of a pebble on the shore, or the flight of a condor on the Andes, or the hurricane that devastates a forest, or even the soft sweet murmur of a turtle-dove in spring, makes its mark and leaves its impression on the entire material universe, so nothing that we do or say, or think or wish, but leaves an impression of some kind on our spiritual being. The loftiest saint and the foulest sinner will each be the workmanship of his own actions. As we live we die; as we die we are judged. We shall have either dug our grave or earned our crown. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Then there is privilege, which I suppose to be the idea contained under the figure of the book of life. This book is not, I take it, applicable to ancient pagandom or modern heathendom, or to any of those who have lived and died outside the opportunities of Christ. It refers specially to those who have been outwardly admitted into the fellowship of Christ's body; to whom, with more or less fulness and frequency and power, Christ has been presented as Saviour and Lord; about whom it will be possible and true for Him to say, "Ye would not come unto Me that ye might have life." When the Lord says to the Church at Sardis, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life," we see a fact, not a hope: there is plain warning of what must happen were the Church to deserve it, and no mere dramatic threat of something which could never

happen. It tells us of a book in which names are written, for the Saviour yearned for their salvation; and a book out of which names can be blotted, for the only thing that separates from the love of God is wilful and repeated sin.

“And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.”

Once more, there is the book of the Divine Law and Will, written and unwritten, from which there will be no escape, which no one then will try to explain away, or pretend it was not for him. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away;” “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath One that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

IV. Then the end. Listen to the beloved apostle of love, who leaned on Jesus’ breast at supper—the disciple whom Jesus loved. “They were judged every man according to their works . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” My brethren, the gospel has its terrible side as well as its pitiful. We read of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; we read also, and in this very book, of the wrath of the Lamb. We must not impoverish our holy faith of all its warnings, and dwell only on its exceeding precious promises. Against human accommodations and modern standards of divine righteousness we must set the words of Scripture and the

severity of Christ. Retribution is inevitable, if sin is sinful, and if character is permanent. Fire is a striking illustration of the agony of self-reproach, and of the awful tyranny of indulged evil. It is not for us to try to be wise beyond what is written, or to peer with a perilous inquisitiveness into the secrets of that future discipline which, for wise purposes of His own, the Judge of all the earth has not made plain to man. This we are sure of, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" and how shall we escape if we neglect it? Can there be a second cross in the life to come, with another Saviour on whom to cast the burden of unrepented sins?

To conclude : 1. In the last judgment we shall all stand together before the Judge. My brethren, do we sufficiently understand that severally and separately we are all standing before Him now? We are always standing before Him, and by the self-acting, inevitable process of His penetrating righteousness He is always judging us. It has been strikingly observed that in all departments of life we are brought face to face with ideal standards, which are just so many tribunals before which even now we live and are judged. The child stands before his parents, the poet before nature, the preacher before the Word of God, the legislator before justice. Our final and aggregate judgment is accumulating moment by moment before God, though unspoken and secret. The verdict will be declared when the Judge comes in His glory, but it is being earned now. How this thought should solemnize life while it dignifies it, steady it while it matures it for the final reward, compensate it for unjust censures and withheld commendation, enrich it with the hope of glory in the presence of the King !

2. For, in a very real sense, while human judgment must be imperfect, and shallow, and one-sided, and tainted with prejudice, and too often on the severe side, it is nevertheless inevitable, being the simple process of the sense of right and wrong within us. Not to exercise it might mean levity, and indifference to evil. The same apostle who has said, "Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come," has also said, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." We are to mature our judgments, though not always to express them; we ought to judge acts, we must not judge motives. We never see more than part of a subject, and we should be slow to condemn, unless all the facts are before us. Charity should mellow us; the consciousness of our own infirmities should make us humble and tender with our brethren. Nevertheless, human opinion, rash and hasty as it may sometimes be, is a real bulwark and protection to human society. On the whole, its verdicts are right, though severe; each in turn suffers from them, but the community is saved.

Once more, St. John tells us at the beginning of the Apocalypse, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." My brethren, you who know Him and love Him, have you ever seriously asked yourselves, when first you behold Him, what your feeling will be? St. John, we know, fell at His feet as dead. When the vision of that awful holiness and majestic beauty first strikes on the soul, it will be a strange mingling of agony and rapture; agony that we should have thought so lightly of Him and so grievously have sinned against His wonderful love, rapture that we possess Him at last. We cannot possibly imagine what it will be to be face to face for the

first time in the body with the visible incarnate righteousness of God. We shall not wish to flee from it ; in a sense we shall welcome it. It may be only for a moment, but in that tremendous moment we shall seem to live many lives. Now we have such shallow thoughts of sin, and such feeble longings after holiness. Our sacrifices are so few, and our devotion so cold. But when we see Him as He is, and by seeing Him are transformed into the glory of His likeness, the pain of the resurrection-birth, though quick, may be a keen anguish.¹

Lastly, there will be no terror, only unspeakable reverence. We shall not fear, for "perfect love casteth out fear;" and this same apostle tells us "that we may have boldness"—or freedom of speech—"in the day of judgment : because as He is, so are we in this world." By freedom of speech is meant, I conceive, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and as in woeful contrast with the dumbness and speechlessness of those who have already condemned themselves, and listened to what is but the approved verdict of their own consciences. They will then have no excuses to make for having neglected the King's invitation : no wedding garment will again be offered for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Isaiah says, "He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

You are now living on earth. Are you living to God or

¹ This thought will be found much more strikingly expressed in the "Dream of Gerontius."

to self? Do you feel that Christ has any claim on you? Are you in any real sense, inadequate and insignificant as it may be, striving to live for His glory? Will you have anything to show Him that you have done for Him, any usury for the gifts and opportunities you enjoy?

Some day you will die; but no one knows, save God, how, and when, and where. Are you fit to die? To the Christian it is merely putting off a garment, and going into another room, and leaving friends here for friends elsewhere—a journey from which you will not return, but to a Father's house with many mansions. Have you cast your sins on your Saviour? Have you surrendered to Him your life? Can you say, "I know whom I have believed," and that "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me"? Are you in any real sense using your gifts, your opportunities, your leisure, your reason, for His glory?

You will be judged. Will the Judge claim you as His possession, welcome you as His disciple, crown you as His servant, invite you into His joy? or will He say, "I know you not, depart from Me"?

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened."

THE VISION OF GOD.

“The brightest crown of action is good done for which there is no reward.”

THE VISION OF GOD.

Preached in Rochester Cathedral, December 3, 1890.

“And they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads.”—REV. xxii. 4.

SCHOLARS differ, as often elsewhere they differ, about the time of this seeing of God. Is it the final reward of the beatific vision, when the purged eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and, like Bartimæus of old, look up at that ineffable and solemn and tender face with wonder and self-abasement; or is it that insight and contemplation of faith, whereby the eye of the regenerate spirit, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”?

In truth it is both, and if there are not both, there will be neither. We must see Him here, or we shall never see Him after death, save as they shall see Him who will wail because of Him. Heaven, which is the vision of God, must begin in us now if it is to be fulfilled to us hereafter; the heavenly places mean the invisible presence of the invisible God.

The text—promise, shall I not call it?—contains two chief ideas: the vision and the result.

I. The vision. "They shall see His face."

Advent—the Second Advent, that is—implies three separated, though connected epochs: the anticipation; the judgment; the glory. For each of these there is a special vision of God, exceptionally, though not exclusively, belonging to it. And while each of the three in measure and degree is more or less appreciated and recognized by the devout spirit, the time of judgment has a wider and deeper comprehension than the time of waiting; and all three unite and culminate in the last.

To see God, is not to behold Him with the organs of sense. In this meaning, "No man hath seen God at any time"—ever can, ever will see Him. It is to apprehend Him in His purpose and attributes and character. In other words, to observe His order, and accept His righteousness, and know His love. What we, who are between the Advents, have to do, is continually and reverently, and even thankfully, to cultivate the sense of a divine superintending will; to live moment by moment in the awful but sustaining presence of the moral Governor of the world; and ever to be sure, even though clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of His seat. We all deeply need in this time of ours—Christian men especially, if they would shine as lights in the world—to appreciate and cultivate and pass on the deep and imperturbable conviction that we are not helplessly drifting in the abyss of a moral chaos, but that this wonderful, beautiful, sorrowful, perplexing world is being ruled by no iron hand, by no stolid fate, by no arbitrary tyrant, by no unstable caprice, but by a Father, who, while He does not now choose to give account of any of His matters to those who must learn to trust before they

can understand, will give account of them presently, will justify Himself before the universe as wise and just and good. Let us confess it is not always easy to trace this order, or to comprehend it. Gordon dies—perhaps does more for us by dying than by living; but the question comes, Why was he let die? Are there so many of such that the world can easily spare them? The waste places of humanity, not only in Africa but in England, reek with seeds of moral pestilence. The nation's conscience is stirred for a moment, and then slumbers again. It takes a woefully long time not only to discover the remedies, but to apply them. When the healing comes, we so often hear the paralyzing message, "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master?" "Too late" burns itself in letters of fire on the soul. From the tempter and the oppressor, hundreds of victims and mourners pass daily to where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. We can only look up above the silent stars, and penetrate with an eager and invisible faith to the throne of Him who bides His time now, as in the days of His flesh; who, if He seems asleep on a pillow while His Church is tossed in the storm, is ready to be aroused by her even impatient devotion; who sitteth above the waterfloods a King for ever; who bids us wait and trust, for He is at the door.

In judgment we shall see His righteousness; and do we know what that means, and are we likely to be able to bear it? As said the prophet of old, "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." But in judgment we shall come face to face with a spotless purity such as no fuller on earth could whiten; with an

ineffable holiness before which the very heavens are not clean ; with a justice which in infallible balances will weigh the merits and demerits of each human soul ; with a love which, while it passeth knowledge, will help us, maybe to our despair, to discover what love means. Think what the revelation will be when it first bursts upon us in that tremendous moment ; what the contrast between His perfection and our shortcomings, in a gulf that will seem to sever the Saviour even from the saved.

When He comes to judge, seeing Him will make us see ourselves, admiring Him will make us loathe ourselves, adoring Him will make us abase ourselves ; and yet, if we have on this side of death cast ourselves on Him that He may save us, yielded ourselves to Him that He may use us, contemplated Him and fed on Him in His ordinances that He may sanctify us, and committed ourselves to Him that He may keep us safe in His everlasting arms, there will be no baseness and no remorse in our wonder, and even anguish ; His righteousness will not crush us, for it will be ours as well as His. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is." In glory, to which we go when the judgment is over, to reign for ever and ever, we shall see His love as no one can see it now. There will be the love of His providence : "How that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place ; . . . who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day." The providence which disappointed us in what was hurtful, only to give

us greater blessing in the end; the providence that suffered us to go on for a while in the way of our own wilfulness, until we had more than enough of it, and crept back like tired and truant children into a kind mother's arms; the providence that chastened us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness; the providence that prepared us for our duties before we were summoned to them, and that purged us of pride and earthliness, to make the blessing safe with which He longed to stir our joy; the providence which pitied the helplessness of our childhood, bore with the petulance of our youth, satisfied the necessities of our manhood, dignified and blessed our ripening years. We shall see it all and understand it all then; the Master's word will be verified to the full: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." The psalmist's experiences will be that of each single soul in the great multitude that no man can number: "Oh, what great troubles and adversities hast thou shown me! Yet didst thou turn again and refresh me; yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again."

But if the love of His providence will seem wonderful, how much more wonderful will be the love of His redemption! For then we shall see the sinfulness of sin as we never saw it before; then we shall see the majesty of the Eternal Godhead as we never comprehended it before; then we shall see the meaning of salvation as we could not see it till it was ours, all ours—ours in body and soul in the resurrection-glory; then we shall see to what depth of shame, and loneliness, and disappointment, and agony the Redeemer stooped, when He took flesh that He might be "the Saviour of the world." "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us

from our sins in His own blood," will be the anthem new every morning and fresh every night. The more we grow in the image of God, and are in sympathy with the purpose of God, and are jealous for the glory of God, and are instructed in the perfection of God, the more amazed shall we be that creatures so vile as we could deserve His pity; the more will the apostle's judgment justify itself to us: "God commendeth His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

II. Such is the vision. What is the result? "His Name shall be in their foreheads." His Name means Himself. To paraphrase it in the most direct and simple way, "God shall be seen in their very face." This, too, has its inchoate and partial accomplishment now. In the apostles' time, men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And as they were stoning Stephen, one who heard and wrote of it said of him that his face was as the face of an angel; and there are those now—we all know them, though there are not too many of them—who by the brightness in their eye, and the purity in their face, and the calmness of their brow, and the gentle dignity of their manner—though not only by these—make us feel and know that they breathe the air, and wear the dress, and speak the language, and frequent the court of the King of kings; and who by their words, and deeds, and motives, and principles, and sacrifices, and devotion, make the discipleship of Christ a real and beautiful confession, and the personality of Christ one of the vital forces of the world.

Hereafter it will be more so than ever; yet initially, in exact proportion to its sweetness and potency here. Each saint in glory will have his new name, and everybody will

know it and call him by it. It will be God's Name and yet his own; no one else will have it but he, and it will become his through what he has learnt, and used, and suffered, and done for the Lord on earth. As the foundations of the wall of the city will be garnished with all manner of precious stones, each saint in that glorified throng will be a separate gem, expressive of its own distinct individuality in gifts, in capacities, in experience, in holiness. Each, like St. Paul even in his mortal body, will bear on him the marks of the Lord Jesus. Each will have his own crown, and his own robe, and his own throne, and his own service. But the colours of each gem will be radiant with the glory of God most high, and in each of His precious jewels will sparkle and flash the beauty of Him who had for it His own ideal from the foundation of the world; who Himself washed it from its daily stains in His own most precious blood, as the condition of its unity with Him, and as the method of its growing edification unto Him; and thereby will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied in each one of His elect, as they walk in white at His side.

May I press on you some last thoughts which seem unspeakably precious for you, and in the truth of which I myself strive to live, and humbly hope to die?

1. Long, strive, pray, to see more and more of God, as your Life, and Hope, and Rest, and exceeding Joy. He is to be seen, be sure of that, but only and always in Christ; not at a moment's notice, nor by repeating a collect or two, nor by a cheap service. But He can be seen—really felt and seen by the eye of the spirit, just in proportion as we hate and resist and overcome sin. Nothing blinds the spiritual power of seeing like sin—sin of any kind, whether

of the flesh or the spirit. See that you hate the thing that is evil. Be very stern with it in yourselves. Be pitiful and gentle, but uncompromising with it in others. "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God" —yes, see God now. There is no blessedness, no dignity, no peace, in the world that comes up to his who can say, "I have seen God, and He has come to live in my heart."

2. Again, you must not expect always to see Him with the same precision and distinctness and power. The sun does not shine in November as it shines in July ; and, besides, there is always night for many hours all the year round. But He can see you ; and when He sees you need it, He will show Himself to you as you really desire it. He will say, "Mary !" you will say, " My Lord and my God !" In a real sense it is necessary to deserve these revelations of God ; and they are usually, though sparingly, given as helps and solaces for duty or suffering. We need not make too much of them, but we must not make too little of them. The recollection of them, when they are over, as with the disciples going to Emmaus, helps us to wait till they return.

3. I spoke just now of deserving these beatific glimpses of the face of God ; and I meant it. But we deserve them only by showing our desire for them, and by qualifying ourselves to use them when they come. The two conditions of deserving them are sacrifice and devotion. Sacrifice means capacity for God. For it springs from love ; and "he that loveth dwelleth in God, and God in him." Each soul has to take counsel with itself what God is worth at its hands ; and what God seems worth, that the soul will give Him. God cannot show Himself at all to the blinded soul, and

to the half-opened soul He can only show Himself a little. But when love unlocks the heart, God is seen as He is, so far as mortal eye can see Him, and the soul is filled with His glory. There is another way—that of devotion—devotion, which includes the constant study of His Word. It was as the disciples walked together the first Easter evening, conversing of Him, and their hearts full of Him, that Jesus joined Himself to them, and walked at their side, and listened to them when they said, “Abide with us,” and went in to tarry with them. To be in constant fellowship with God, in the conscientious discharge of duty, in the practice of gentle charity and truth man with man, in the simplicity of spiritual worship, and in the aiming after even greater holiness, is the one and the only and the victorious secret of living in the presence of God.

My brethren, in a little while all that now shuts out the actual face of Jesus will have disappeared. This garment of flesh will have disappeared into the grave. These bodily senses, essential to our present condition, will be transformed and transfigured in the resurrection-glory. We shall see Him face to face, about whom now we feebly stammer, like infants learning an alphabet; and my last question to you is—When He comes, and you see Him at last, and He asks you what you have learnt of Him, and done or suffered for Him, what shall you have to say? Will He be able to welcome you and to crown you; or must He send you into the darkness, with His holy, tender face sadly turned away?

When that day comes—it is coming, and it may be very near—may we be all found together, with His Name on our foreheads and His praises on our lips, thankful as those who on earth have gone to the house of God together;

to meet again for ever in that blessed city, where there is no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it;" and which hath no need of the sun or of the moon to lighten it, "for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof."

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